

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

CVG



EXCLUSIVE MULTI-FORMAT REVIEW
SPLINTER CELL
PANDORA TOMORROW

And it gets a coveted CVG Gold Award. Ker-ching!

Killzone VS Halo 2

WORLD EXCLUSIVE #1

PS2 and Xbox heavyweights go head-to-head in CVG's shooter showdown



23 NEW PICS

grand theft auto
Sin city

CVG tails Tommy Vercetti and finds out what's next for Vice City

PS3 UNVEILED!

And we also lift the lid on Xbox 2, PSP, Cube 2 & more

First & Best For Reviews!
86 GAMES RATED

- Metal Gear Twin Snakes
- Rainbow Six 3 PS2
- SOCOM II
- Alias
- Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles
- This Is Football 2004
- Ghost Recon Jungle Storm
- LMA Manager '04
- & LOADS more!

Check out my tips on p106!



WORLD EXCLUSIVE #2

ONIMUSHA-3

Can PS2's last samurai cut it with the best of 'em, or will it slash and burn?

WORLD EXCLUSIVE #3

BREAKDOWN

RATED: the Xbox shooter that will blow your mind!





MISSION: SURVIVAL.

The full story of Samus Aran's first mission finally unfolds. Blast your way through the maze-like caverns of planet Zebes and rid the universe of the Metroid menace. Will you be a hero, or zero?

OUT 9th APRIL

METROID ZERO MISSION
Only on Game Boy Advance.



GAME BOY ADVANCE SP

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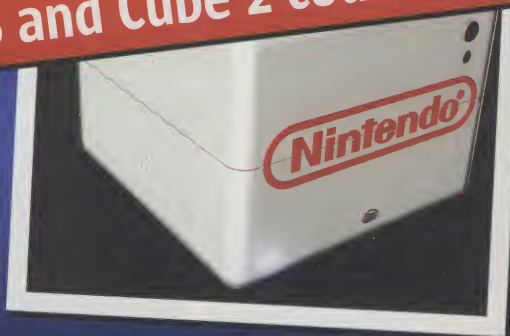
**APRIL
2004**

THE MONTH THAT...

CVG's experts pore over hard facts to come up with Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft's next-gen consoles!



IS THIS SONY'S NEXT-GEN MONSTER?
Only CVG has the power to show you what Xbox 2, PSP, DS and Cube 2 could look like!



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**THIS
MONTH'S
CVG IN
NUMBERS**

NUMBER OF GAMES

510

NUMBER OF SCREENS

797

GAMES RATED

86

NURSE NORK COUNT

22

IT'S THE BEST CVG EVER! TURN OVER AND LET'S GO!

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Rainbow Six 3

It blew us all away on PC and Xbox, but can Ubisoft's big-selling series stand out from the crowd of tactical shooters ranging in on PS2?

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Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles

The legendary RPG series comes home to a Nintendo console. It's got an all-new style - but was it worth the wait?

34

Socom II

Boldly leading PS2 back into the frontline of the online conflict, will the series go straight to the top of the charts again or eat a lead sandwich?



CVG: THE GREATEST GAMES MAG EVER!



Whether you're an Xbox fanboy who adores Halo, or a fresh-faced recruit desperate for Killzone, the new look CVG you're holding in your hands contains *everything* you need if you're hardcore into games.

CVG's the **ONLY** mag to compare 2004's two biggest blasters, the **ONLY** place to get the inside scoop on all the next-gen consoles, and the **ONLY** mag to rate every new game on every format. That's a lot of **ONLYs**! So make sure you **ONLY** stick with CVG!

Alex Simmons
Alex Simmons Editor

theteam

ON THE FRONTLINES OF THE VIDEOGAME WAR THIS MONTH:



Alex Simmons Editor

General Alex has been carefully orchestrating the carnage from his atomic bomb-proof editorial bunker.



Pete Walker Managing Editor

Pete's our hard-boiled drill sergeant, whipping our scrawny copy into mean fighting machinery.



Lee Skittrell Reviews Editor

Lee's honourable experience with Samurai games has added a shine of Sun Tzu to our battle tactics.



Mike Cooper News Editor

Corporal Cooper's been in amongst the nagalm in 'Nam bringing you the steamy scoop on ShellShocked.



Graeme Boyd Staff Writer

And Grazza's feeling shellshocked after seeing the Halo 2 vs Killzone conflict. "You weren't there, man!"



Paul Davies Contributing Ed

Paul's our top secret special ops agent. He sits by the toilet - so that explains the Sphincter Smell.



Jaime Smith Art Editor

Jaime's the conquering war hero, deploying all his high-powered design artillery with precision.



Mike Newson Design Troll

Nuisance channels his aggression into joypads during Pro Evo games. You can hear them cracking.



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RISE OF THE MACHINES



"GET THE INSIDE SCOOP ON PS3, XBOX 2, PSP AND NINTENDO'S DS AND N5 RIGHT NOW!"



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KILLZONE VS HALO 2

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ONIMUSHA 3

"A SWEATY, HEART-POUNDING EYEBALL-SEARING, KICK-UP-THE-ARSE BLUR"



IN THE BOOKS

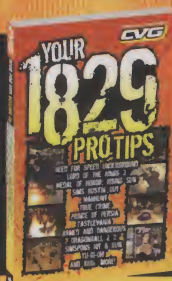


CVG MASTER GUIDES #1

100% COMPLETE GUIDES TO THE BEST GAMES

007 EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

- Be better than Bond with our action-packed walkthrough
- CASTLEMANIA
- Every level mapped, every part of the game slashed wide open

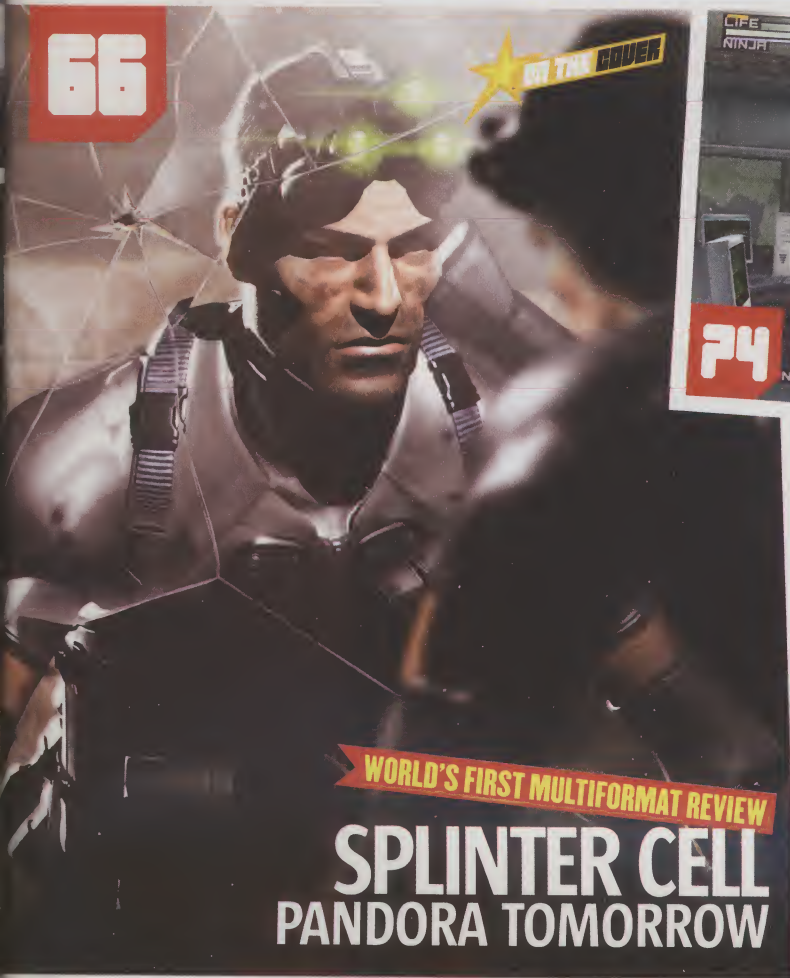


YOUR 1829 PRO TIPS

BUSTIN' TIPS FOR THOUSANDS OF GAMES!

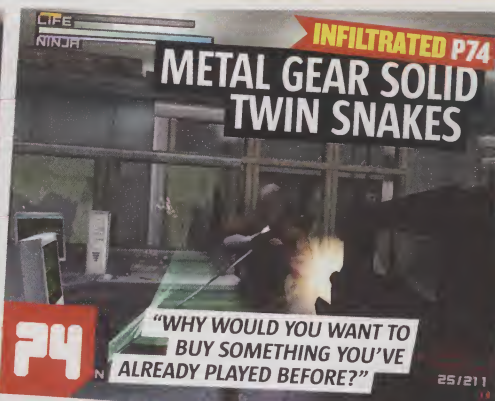
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WORLD'S FIRST MULTIFORMAT REVIEW

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW



METAL GEAR SOLID TWIN SNAKES

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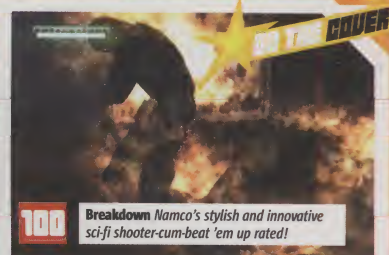
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Driver 3 It's been like 100 years in the making (well, feels that way), finally we go hands-on!



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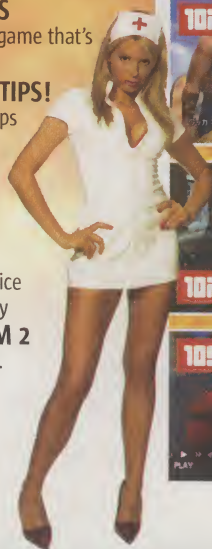
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FLIP IT FOR THE RED HOT SCOOP

Get your news hungry ass over the page and chomp on 12 bulging pages of tasty stories from all across the globe. Planet CVG brings you more news than any other mag out there. Here's the proof!



ShellShock offers wars 'n' all warfare. You'll witness all sorts of atrocities, such as these hangings

HERE COMES THE PAIN



The other night my missus decided to bite my nipple during a bit of slap and

tickle. Normally such an attack would make me squeal like a pig, but this time it only made things better.

Proof to me that pleasure and pain really can be chums. With this in mind, I thought that this month I'd give you a taster of how exciting this blend of discomfort and delight can be by hunting down the hottest news on upcoming games with a smidge of S&M about them...

Burnout 3 will seduce you with its sexy looks, but the action moves so fast you'll get chronic whiplash. The next GTA game promises to romance the arse off you with tasty scenery, but you'll be disgusted with what you're meant to do when you get there. Then there are the mind-bending horrors of war in ShellShock: Nam '67 for the more extreme S&M enthusiast. Enjoy!

Mike Cooper

Mike Cooper News Editor

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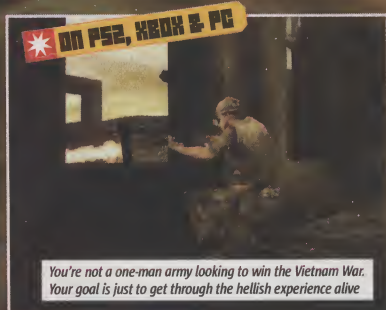
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EXCLUSIVE

SHOCK TACTICS

PLANET CVG DIVES INTO A FOXHOLE WITH THE CREATORS OF SHELLSHOCK: 'NAM '67 TO BRING YOU THE INSIDE SCOOP ON THE MOST BRUTAL WAR GAME EVER



ON PS2, XBOX & PC

You're not a one-man army looking to win the Vietnam War. Your goal is just to get through the hellish experience alive

The Medal Of Honors of this world bullshit us with their cotton wool-wrapped Hollywood take on war.

In these games you shoot an enemy in the skull and their head flops back like they've been hit with a feather pillow. Sod that crap. ShellShock: Nam '67 gives it to us straight. It's the dirty real deal that dares to show you the darkest side of war. Nail a foe with a machine-gun and you'll

tear 'em to shreds. Heads roll, limbs explode, and guts trail like a split bag of butcher's offal.

This is exactly the sort of game that we expect from Guerrilla, the daring new developer behind Killzone. Cutting edge and controversial, it's set to become one of the most frighteningly exciting third-person shooters out there, and it's coming to PS2, Xbox and PC this summer.

We hooked up with ShellShock's lead designer, Doug Walker, to get the first uncensored low-down on Guerrilla's newest recruit.

GUERRILLA WARFARE

The nastiness of the Vietnam War inspires ShellShock. As Doug says, "During the course of the game you will witness graphic scenes of civilians being beheaded, hung by

the neck and executed by NVA troops". It's going to shock the nuts off you!

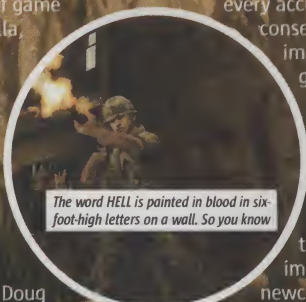
Plus when you're engaged in combat every accurate shot has devastating consequences. "We have implemented a system that gives graphic hit reactions to weapon impacts," Doug tells us. "This leads to enemies becoming injured and incapacitated through limb damage and loss."

ShellShock promises to leave nothing to the imagination. But Guerrilla's newcomer isn't just a showcase for the gore of war. Like its Killzone cousin, rock solid gameplay lies at the heart of this ultra dark 'Nam-time thriller.

JUNGLE IS MASSIVE

Whereas titles like MOH: Rising Sun lead you through environments on a suffocatingly tight leash, ShellShock gives you freedom to explore masses of dense jungle and war-torn urban terrain. Admittedly you will have to complete a certain set of objectives per mission, but you can choose to tackle extra objectives if you're feeling more daring.

Doug confirms this by mentioning how Guerrilla wants to offer us an "unscripted experience... allowing the player to play



The word HELL is painted in blood in six-foot-high letters on a wall. So you know



The Vietcong don't even use sharp blades to cut off heads. Check out the flaps of ripped flesh dangling down... Blurgh!

"HEADS ROLL, LIMBS EXPLODE, AND GUTS TRAIL LIKE A SPLIT BAG OF BUTCHER'S OFFAL"



Back at your base camp you can sell stuff that you pick up in the field. Use the cash to buy illegal weapons - you'll need them in other missions

PLAYSTATION PORTABLE

Insiders are claiming that Sony has already completed a prototype model of PSP, which already houses a rechargeable battery capable of ten hours of play. Two hours more than an iPod. Also, the finished retail machine is expected to have an even longer battery life.



GOLDENEYE 2

EA is rumoured to be working on a new 007 game based on the GoldenEye movie, which is likely to make its global debut at the E3 games expo this May. However, it's frigging unlikely that it'll be nearly as revolutionary as the N64 version.



NO LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

Konami has announced a sequel to Hideo Kojima's barney light-sensitive vampire-staking game, Boktai. UK gamers are yet to get a sniffer of the original, which has been on sale in Japan for over six months now. We contacted Konami for news on a UK release date but hit a brick wall.



The lack of any multiplayer options is surprising, as it seems tailor-made for co-op teamplay

We're not sure what's being torched here, and we're not sure if we WANT to know

A Phantom buzzes past your squad on its way to carry out an air-strike and lay down some Napalm

the game how they want and not be forced into completing a series of heavily scripted encounters." This is blinding news, and should make ShellShock the perfect antidote to the current batch of lightweight wartime console shooters doing the rounds.

However, we were miffed to hear that there won't be any multiplayer or online options. Nonetheless, with every drop of Guerrilla's enthusiasm (and shared technology from Killzone) channelled into a killer single-player campaign, we could have this year's war hero on our hands. Check out next issue for more grizzly facts and scorching shots of ShellShock in action. *

As the game is set in 1967, Guerrilla is pushing to give ShellShock an authentic '60s soundtrack

*** SHOW US YER BOOBIES!**

Booby traps are set to play a major role in ShellShock. You can set 'em as well as trigger them, and it's gonna get messy.

You play a rookie American soldier who can place Claymores and trip grenades in Vietcong hotspots – but be careful, because the enemy has similar ideas. Except their boobies are much more primal and savage, like bamboo swings and spiked log traps. Some can be disarmed, but others must be avoided under all circumstances.

You can even see your buddy's severed spinal column poking out the bottom of his flak jacket

The graphics are dusty and dirty, like a mixture of Saving Private Ryan visuals and dodgy old 8mm film footage

Although the action is squad-based, your team-mates won't do all the hard work for you Rainbow Six-style

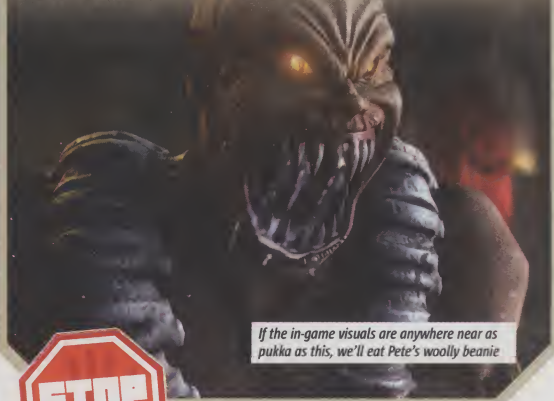
BARAKA'S BACK!

NEW MORTAL KOMBAT FLASHES ITS BLOODY GNASHERS

This scarily detailed screenshot is the first image of the next Mortal Kombat game – according to the world's biggest online fansite, Mortal Kombat Online.

The image was leaked to the website through an insider source. Baraka looks mean as a mofo, and although this is clearly not an in-game picture, word is that this new gore fest will wipe the floor with Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance in terms of looks.

We also hear that this new game could be called Mortal Kombat: Deception, because back on February 6 Midway registered a couple of domain names entitled mortalcombatdeception.com and mkdeception.com. Midway has yet to officially confirm the existence of the game, but we'll bring you all the gory details as soon as they bubble to the surface.



If the in-game visuals are anywhere near as pukka as this, we'll eat Pete's woolly beanie



Nintend'oh!

COULD DS MARK THE BEGINNING OF THE END FOR NINTENDO?

Last month we brought you the first news on Nintendo's upcoming dual-screened handheld, Nintendo DS.

Since its announcement the games industry has been alive with negative banter. It's fair to say that most people reckon it's going to suck a fat one. This is worrying for all Nintendo fans, because this week it's just become clear how important the handheld truly is to the company's future.

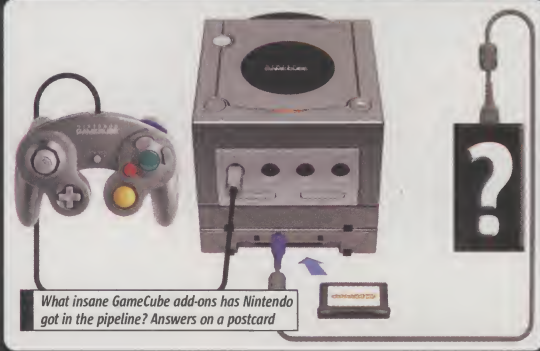
Nintendo ex-president Hiroshi Yamauchi spoke out to a Japanese magazine, stating the frightening news that if Ninty is "unsuccessful with the DS, we may not go bankrupt, but we will be crushed." We suspect Nintendo has pretty deep pockets, but flick to page 54 for all the hard facts on the next wave of consoles including DS.

*** THE TIME CON-GAME**

*** DUMB AND DUMBERER**

With so much resting on the success of DS, logic would suggest that Nintendo doesn't have any other hare-brained pieces of hardware nuzzled up its sleeve. You'd be wrong!

News has just surfaced that Nintendo is working on a new batch of peripherals that will be compatible with GameCube. We haven't got the foggiest what it's beavering away on, but if history is anything to go by the new bolt-on accessories will be wackier than the world Whack-A-Mole championships. These new peripherals are expected to make an appearance at the E3 games show in LA this May. We'll be sending a crack team to the giant show, so make sure you catch Planet CVG's report then.



What insane GameCube add-ons has Nintendo got in the pipeline? Answers on a postcard



TEKKEN 5!

Word has it that the next Tekken fighter is expected to hit PS2 sometime between April 2004 and March 2005. Namco was unavailable for comment at the time of going to press but stay tuned!



PS2 VIDEOPHONE

This month Sony of Japan revealed it's making a system to let PS2 owners with broadband use their console like a videophone. It works with a basic USB web cam but it's not yet clear whether EyeToy will be compatible too.

BAD BOYS

Feckin' promises! We were promised Bad Boys II and Battlefield Vietnam for review this issue, but at the last minute EA and Empire failed to deliver. Roll on the May issue...



BURNOUT 3

THE ULTIMATE RISK-TAKING ROAD RAGER RETURNS! CAN YOU HANDLE LIFE IN THE FASTEST LANE ON EARTH, OR ARE YA CHICKEN?



Burnout 3 is steaming over the horizon at 200mph and it's not braking for anyone. Even if that means writing-off Need For Speed: Underground by ramming it mercilessly into a ditch and leaving its gnarled chassis for dead.

The last two Burnout games were reckless, but Burnout 3 is plain insane. It chews up and swallows the Highway Code, pooping out what could be the purest race-based adrenaline buzz EVER.

Stuff all that fast and furious rubbish. Burnout 3 promises to be so blisteringly quick and ballsy that it'll rip your eyeballs out and dangle 'em from its rear-view mirror.

COLLISION COURSE

This isn't just a cut 'n' shut re-spray job from developer Criterion. Burnout 3 is an all-new motor with enough power tucked under its turtle-waxed bonnet to launch a rocket to the moon.

It's been treated to a blinding overhaul, guaranteed to blow your nut. Several thick layers of graphical polish, an enormous garage of new cars, more killer tracks, and most importantly the gameplay has been expertly re-tuned.

Now the action is hairier than a grizzly bear's bum-crack. The emphasis isn't solely on weaving wildly between oncoming traffic, and performing crazed manoeuvres in order to pump up your

Burnout gauge. Sure, you still have to do all this cool stuff, but the series has evolved. Burnout 3 is much more aggressive this time out, because the focus is now on the battle between you and your other opponents.

Previously, it was all pretty civilized, but now it's all about driving dirty. You are rewarded mega points and Burnout juice for playing rough, and now there are five other drivers to worry about instead of three. Ram the crap out of your enemies. Smash them into barriers, cut 'em up and send them smashing into concrete pylons! The more menacing and merciless your manoeuvre the better!

Plus all these deadly driving moves have got awesome names that boldly flash up on the screen whenever you nail one. Beefy, manly words like 'Slam!' and 'Takedown!'. It's like you're laying the smackdown on their sorry arses.

WHAT A TOTAL SAP!

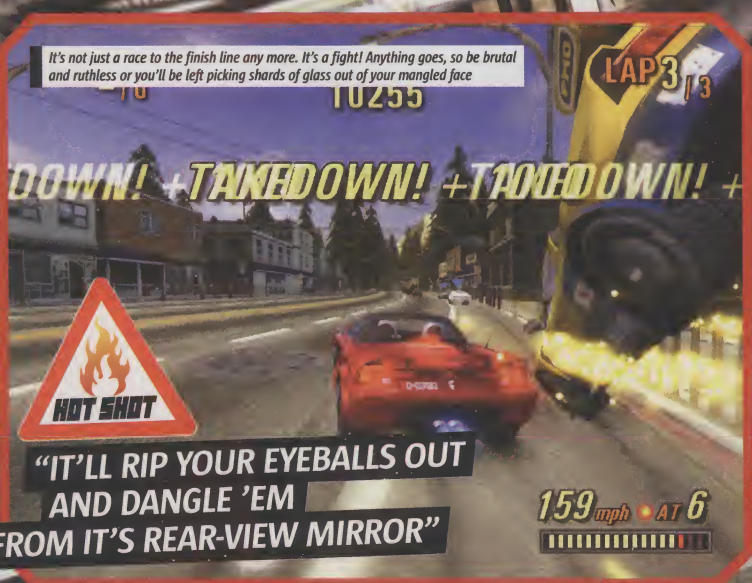
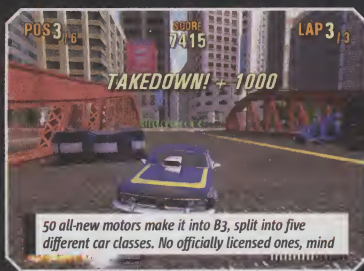
We love the sound of this new gameplay mechanism, but there's also an extra incentive for driving dirty. Every time you hit someone you sap some of juice out of

OUT
SEPTEMBER ON
PS2 & XBOX

their Burnout bar— but it's not all one-way traffic. Your opponents promise to raise just as much terror on the tarmac as you, and they're after your Burnout power juice too. So don't expect an easy ride, as you furiously tug-o-war for boost energy.

Plus it's no longer a waiting game, because anyone can use their Burnout bar at any time, making the sizzling loop all the more precious.

From what we've seen so far, Burnout 3 only has one gear – full steam ahead! Everything about Criterion's latest juggernaut is pushing our buttons, and we can't wait to get our necks wrecked with whiplash when it screeches into UK shops this September 2004, only on PS2 and Xbox.



REV UP YOUR BROADBAND

Burnout 3 publisher EA has confirmed it'll play online, but the bad news is that net-based racing will only be available on PS2. EA still refuses to team up with Microsoft for broadband gaming, which is a kick in the nads for us all, because it'd tear along spectacularly on Xbox Live. First no NFS: Underground, now this. However, great news for any spiteful PS2 owners out there.

So whaddya get online? Six players can rip up the streets, just like in the single-player game. Plus now the cars are all associated with characters, throwing a ton more personality into the mix and giving you more of an identity when you hook up online. Criterion has yet to reveal any specifics on new online game modes, but we'll keep you posted, of course.



It's not been confirmed whether you'll be able to bark insults at rivals over the USB headset



Cut 'em up, welly into them, steal some of their Burnout energy and then shid nto first place

FAR CRY FROM PC

Uwe Boll, producer/director of the upcoming *House Of The Dead* movie, has supposedly signed up for the movie of Ubisoft's red hot PC shooter *Far Cry*.

ARCADE HEAVEN

Japanese publishing giants Sammy and SNK Playmore are joining forces to release a couple of new arcade titles. Both companies recently announced that *King Of Fighters 2004* and *Metal Slug 6* are two of the titles currently in the pipeline.

LIFE IS DUTIFUL

Infinity Ward is inviting you to download a level-editing kit for *Call Of Duty* and enter your DIY efforts into a compo. Entry deadline is March 26. The winner snags top PC bootie and a trip to LA! See www.activision.com/microsite/cqd_sweeps.

Slam this chump into the barrier and burn up the shortcut appearing on the right to get an edge on the rest of the pack

LAP 1/3

120

149 mph AT 6



SMASHEY AND NICEY

As you'd expect, Criterion is making sure that the crashes are even more explosive and dramatic this time round, with cars and trucks flipping and crumpling in every direction!

But you're not only going to mangle vehicles. The environments promise to be rammed with regular objects and street scenery that can be smashed out of sight and obliterated. Get in!



When you're not creating massive multi-car pile-ups, wreck the hell out of your surroundings

Bolt the sofa to the floor and superglue your ass to it before playing *Burnout 3*, or you could be blown through the living room wall and into next-door's bathroom

LAP 1/3

SLAM! + 100

"HAIRIER THAN A GRIZZLY BEAR'S BUM-CRACK"



LOCATION, LOCATION

The tracks and settings in *Burnout 3* are set to be streets ahead of its predecessors.

You'll be blazing through stacks of stunning locations based on areas from all over the world. There'll be courses threaded through dense jungle areas, snow-covered mountains and gritty cityscapes to name but a handful. That ought to get your big end greased!



The landscapes are even more gob-smackingly gorgeous third time round. Only problem is, you rarely get a moment to soak it all up



XBOX
LIVE

XBOX LIVE UPGRADE

Codenamed Baumani, the new Xbox Live upgrade introduces cool new features like setting up and managing clans. Your friends will appear online, plus you'll be able to have a 10-second voice message with every friend invitation.



NEW BALLS PLEASE

This Summer Sony is releasing the sequel to Smash Court Tennis on PS2, to coincide with Wimbledon and Hen-f@cking-mania. No online multiplayer, though.

SPLASH OUT!

Found your free Splash Plastic card in this CVG? It's a pre-paid credit card anyone can use, whether you're hunting for cheap games online or in stores. Visit www.splashplastic.com for more info.



Hot or Not?



NEXT-GEN MACHINES

We're just as excited about the next wave of consoles as you are! Check out our massive next-gen feature on page 51 for proof of how damp with anticipation we truly are. Grab a cloth while you're at it!



THE NEW GOLDENEYE

On page 7 we revealed news that EA is basing its next Bond game on shooter legend GoldenEye, and we reckon it could go either way in terms of quality. However, EA is fully clued in on how well loved the original N64 version is, so it won't want to balls it up.



GBA BOMBS

A nutty high school kid in America was arrested this month for possessing a Game Boy which he had gutted and stuffed full of explosives. One of his mates doxxed him in, and good job too. Friggin' loony.



SHELLSHOCK: NAM 67

The developer of Killzone is cooking up a wartime horror show that'll churn your stomach and play havoc with your mind. It's set to become the Apocalypse Now or Full Metal Jacket of videogames.



FOOTIE GAMES THAT AREN'T PES3

Last month Urban Freestyle Soccer let the air out of our balls, and this month This Is Football 2004 has given our fun glands a good studding. Quite why anyone buys these toss games is the Holy Grail of videogaming mysteries.



MARIO ON DEATH ROW!

NINTENDO PLANS TO KILL OFF HAIRY-LIPPED HERO!

Nintendo has just unveiled a shocking new strategy this month that it hopes will make GameCube appeal to older gamers.

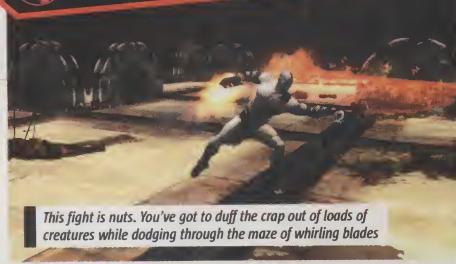
On April 1, Shigeru Miyamoto will be destroying a 50ft Mario sculpture in Trafalgar Square using a Rocket Propelled Grenade. This terrible act is meant to signify the end of an era, and a new chapter for Nintendo.

The Japanese legend will then fire life-size replicas of Kirby, Link, and Donkey Kong into the Thames (over Big Ben) using a medieval swing-lever catapult.

All are welcome, and Nintendo is encouraging fans to write poems and bring flowers to place on a 13-inch memorial statue of Mario, that will be erected next to the bus stop by Trafalgar Square on the day.

The event is set to kick off at midday, so if you're hoping to attend make sure you get there nice and early, and remember to wear black.

EXCLUSIVE



This fight is nuts. You've got to duff the crap out of loads of creatures while dodging through the maze of swirling blades

GOD OF WAR

SONY'S MYTHICAL MONSTER REARS ITS HEAD ON PS2

This week Sony unveiled nerve-ripping footage and mental screens of a surprise new actioner called *God Of War* for PS2.

It's a third-person Prince Of Persia-style epic that looks every bit as polished and stunning as Ubisoft's kingly adventure. Except we reckon this could steal the Prince's crown.

All the action is set in a world where the creatures of ancient Greek mythology have come to life. You're guaranteed some utterly jaw-dropping set-piece battles.

We've seen moments where you leap onto the back of a 40-foot-tall Cyclops and have to stab him in the eye as he thrashes around. You get to wrestle on the ground with slithering serpents and rip off their wings. Then there's the bit with snake-

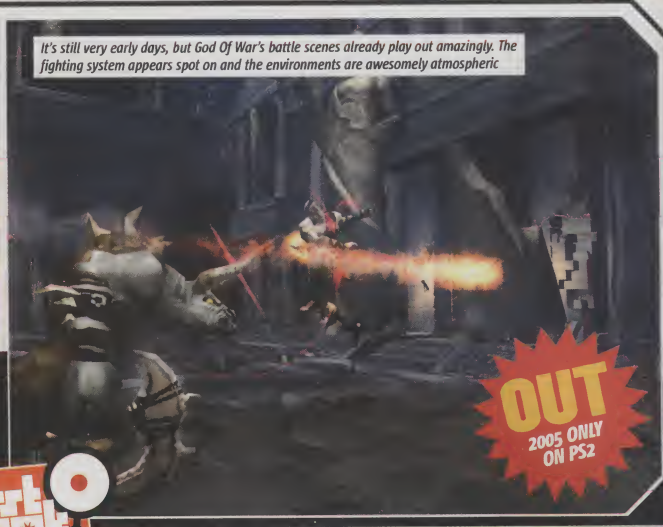
headed Medusa - you cut off her head and use it to transform enemies to stone with its deadly stare! Plus you'll be going toe-to-toe with other



famously ferocious beasts like the Minotaur.

The combat and the character animations look just as dazzling as those in Prince Of Persia, but the hero in *God Of War* is even faster and more acrobatic.

Similarly, there are loads of giant puzzle-rooms to leap and flip your way through. But it's all the massive monsters and extraordinary clashes that make *God Of War* such a standout title. We'll be keeping close tabs on it in the run-up to its release in 2005. Stick with Planet CVG for all the best coverage in the coming months. More next issue!

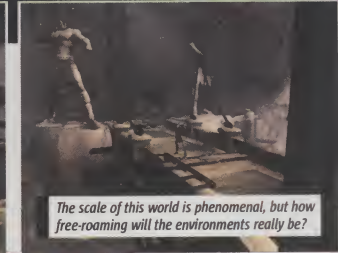


It's still very early days, but *God Of War*'s battle scenes already play out amazingly. The fighting system appears spot on and the environments are awesomely atmospheric

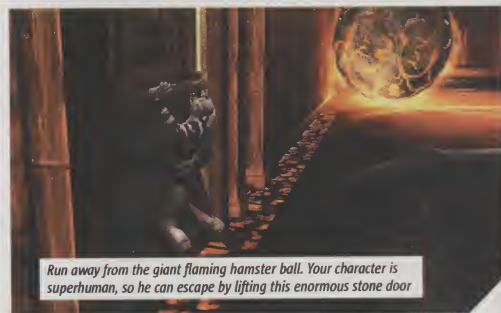
OUT
2005 ONLY
ON PS2



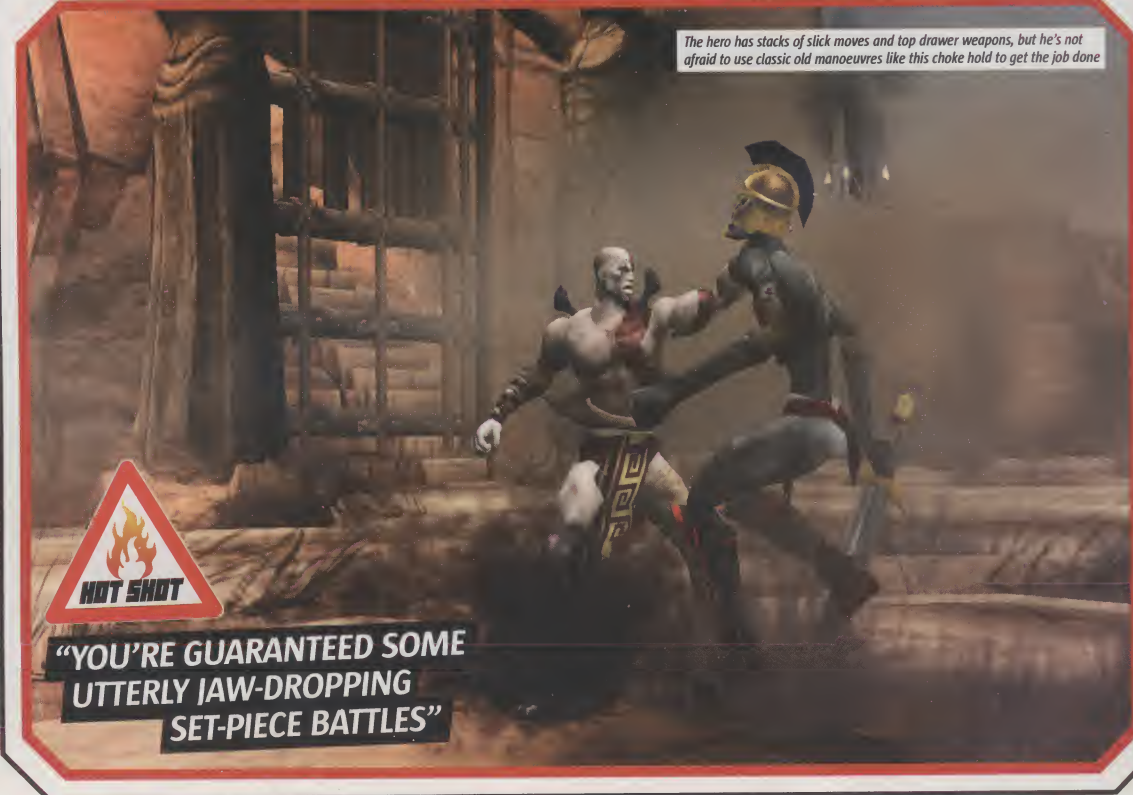
"Hello, anybody here? I've come to sort out ya dodgy stonework. I'll get me wheelbarrow!"



The scale of this world is phenomenal, but how free-roaming will the environments really be?



Run away from the giant flaming hamster ball. Your character is superhuman, so he can escape by lifting this enormous stone door



The hero has stacks of slick moves and top drawer weapons, but he's not afraid to use classic old manoeuvres like this choke hold to get the job done



"YOU'RE GUARANTEED SOME UTTERLY JAW-DROPPING SET-PIECE BATTLES"

• FROM THE CREATORS OF FINAL FANTASY •

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EVERY LEGEND HAS ITS ROOTS.

Long ago, the Mana Goddess transformed herself into a sacred tree, to protect the land and its people. But now, evil forces are attempting to seize its mystic power. Only a gladiator and a mysterious girl hold the key to the Mana Tree's destiny. Branch out on the ultimate quest.

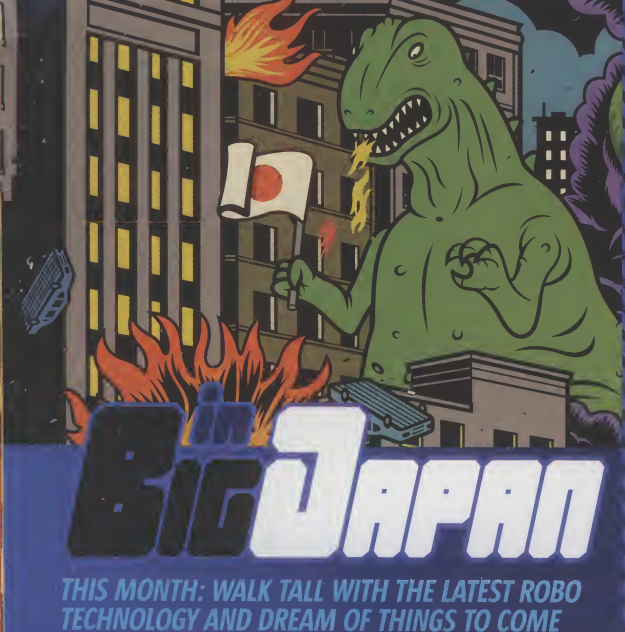
OUT 19th MARCH

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THIS MONTH: WALK TALL WITH THE LATEST ROBO TECHNOLOGY AND DREAM OF THINGS TO COME



From our big green friend Godzilla trampling Tokyo to stomping around cities in a giant mech, why do the Japanese love such wanton mammoth destruction? Social experts say it stems from the horror of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but maybe it's simply a cool thing to do.

The Japanese have been embracing mech games and giant robo suits for ages. Armored Core, Xenogears, and Steel Battalion all have one cool thing in common – giant machinery is great for stomping on stuff. And it seems that Japanese scientists agree. They're leading the field in designing robots that mimic our actions and can be used in harmony with their human masters.

Japan's government has set up a Humanoid Robotics Project, hoping to create robot workers to labour alongside humans. The HRP-2P robot from by Kawada industries is a breakthrough in the field. It is the first robot the size and shape of a human that can stand up and lie down on its own as well as walk on two legs.

New robotic technology can also aid the disabled and elderly. Powered suits designed by the University of Tsukuba work by supplementing the wearer's own physical strength. A version could be available in shops by 2008.

Robots will also soon be helping us with chores at home. Matsushita's small N-Robo has a sensor allowing it to memorise the shape of a room and objects within it so it can vacuum it for you! Sanyo's watchdog robot Banryu patrols your house if you're out and is accessed remotely by mobile phone. He has a camera and sensors detecting temperature rises.

Baby steps into the field of robotics for now, perhaps, but we hope Japanese scientists are dreaming of the day they can suit up and go to work in a giant 30ft mech.



PAC-MAN, PAC-DALEK

JAPAN'S TOP-SELLING GAMES

1. Dragon Ball Z 2 (PS2) Bandai ... 353,429 copies
2. Pokemon Fire Red/Leaf Green (GBA) ... 298,775 copies
3. Puyo Puyo Fever (PS2) Sega ... 64,656 copies
4. Hajime no Ippo 2 Victorious Road (PS2) ESP ... 51,083 copies
5. Fushin Shinsen Gumi (PS2) Genki ... 46,685 copies



BACK ON THE PROWL

Way back in February's issue we broke the news of Manhunt's forthcoming release on Xbox and PC. This month, Rockstar has unveiled some ultra crisp pics of the PC version. Both are now expected to arrive in the UK for August this year.



Sega-AM2 is planning to launch another follow-up to Virtua Fighter 4 in the near future. Dubbed Virtua Fighter 5, which is still ages away. Sigh.



BEASTLY BEHAVIOUR

VEGGIES BEWARE! FIRST MEATY MONSTER HUNTER FACTS

Capcom has finally lifted the veil on Monster Hunter, another PS2 four-person adventure from the team that created Resident Evil Outbreak.

Unlike Resi Outbreak, the landscapes are enormous forested areas shared by humans and dirty great flesh-chewing creatures. It's hunt or be hunted!

Both the single-player and online multiplayer quests force you to battle these gigantic beasts out in the wild, utilising each team-mate's unique fighting techniques to slaughter packs of marauding monsters.

Plus you'll have the freedom to customise and develop each character's talents RPG-style. And as the game opens up you get to choose which sort of assignment you want to take, like defending a small village from bloodthirsty beasts or hunting for sacred items. Every decision you make and each route you pursue will throw up different opportunities for your warriors!

Capcom has also confirmed that there'll be extra quests and items available for those of you who dare to venture online. Still no concrete release date for Europe, although Capcom has assured us that it'll definitely hit shelves before Christmas 2004.

MONSTER WEAPONS

You don't just have to equip your monster-mashing heroes with weapons and gear bought from villages on your travels. You can also create customised stuff from hacked-off bits of monsters, like claws and scales.



In Monster Hunter, traditional yurts like this are made of the bones of slain beast and woolly mammoth scrotums. Probably



Sir Lance-a-lot sticks his double-ender into a Raptor-like creature



Track prey using the intricate map in the top right



Meet up with three other mates online for a bout of monster mashing

Truffle muncher!



MANAGER '05

Sports Interactive, creators of Champ Man, has shackled up with Sega in a five-year deal to produce a new PC footie management series. Football Manager 2005 is out 2004.

50 YEARS OF WAR ON PS2

World War Zero: Ironstorm is coming to PS2 this summer. This Return To Castle Wolfenstein-style shooter is set in 1964 but puts you in a nightmarish alternate reality where the First World War never ended. It's a major rethink from the iffy PC version.



UPDATE!

ONLINE DEATHMATCH

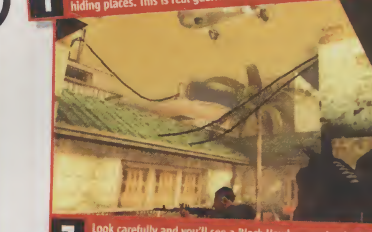
ATARI'S XBOX ASSASSIN MOVES IN FOR THE KILL

Shadow Ops: Red Mercury is gunning its way onto Xbox this May and gearing up to steal Rainbow Six 3's online thunder.

It's got bags of Live-enabled multiplayer options, and although both games share many similarities in terms of squad-based action and mission types, Shadow Ops looks far more explosive and in-your-face than its archrival. Keep 'em peeled for more on this potential giant-killer next issue.



1 Guttered buildings, fires everywhere and stacks of cheeky hiding places. This is real guerrilla warfare



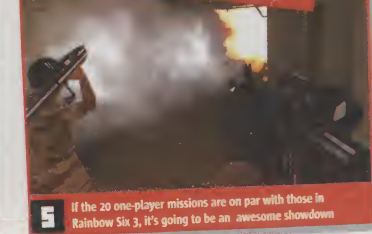
2 Look carefully and you'll see a Black Hawk swooping in. Take out the hostiles before they gun down your ride outta there



3 Up to 16 players can get in on the Xbox Live action, with Plant The Bomb and Escort modes among the options



4 You'll be able to equip yourself with masses of authentic weapons used by various real-life special forces units



5 If the 20 one-player missions are on par with those in Rainbow Six 3, it's going to be an awesome showdown



Halle's cat cossie looks like a low-rent fetish cossie from Argos. Meow



SEX KITTEN. MEOW

CATWOMAN POUNCES ONTO CONSOLE

Halle Berry's got CVG fighting like cats. Half of us reckon her outfit in this summer's superhero blockbuster is the sexiest ever, the rest reckon she looks like a cheap 'n' cheesy cast-off from a bondage basement.

Catwoman the movie premieres in the US on July 30 and EA has swiped up the rights to produce the game for PS2, Xbox, GameCube and GBA. All versions are due to launch together but no official release date has been revealed for Europe yet. Our sources suggest we'll be playing with EA's leathery pussy by the end of the summer.

Action-wise, you'll perform all the fantastic feline manoeuvres that heavenly Halle pulls off in the movie. According to EA, Catwoman "leaps across roofs, pounces on prey, and utilises her incredible cat-sense" to take down scumbag foes and tongues herself all over every five minutes. Okay, we made that last bit up.

XBOX GETS SLUGGED

Metal Slug 3 peppers Xbox with fun

It's regarded in hardcore circles as one of the best 2D platform shooters ever, with its hilariously stupid scenarios and wild two-player co-op action - and it's coming to Xbox this May.

Metal Slug 3 will be a straight port of the arcade version, with every pixellated mullet haircut and camel hump perfectly in place. But Xbox owners will be treated to a little something extra. This version is Live-enabled. No, sadly you won't be able to go co-op with other metalheads online, but you will be able to see your scores on an online leaderboard. Oh well.



Crank up a mental score and test yourself against the best with global rankings online

RUCKIN' ROBOTS!

News that Microsoft is currently developing Mech Assault 2 has got us all doing silly robotic dances of joy.

This time you take on the role of an actual pilot and can choose to man any vehicle in the game, including standard mechs, landing craft and tanks. You're also now able to hijack vehicles. Neat!



Latch onto the side of buildings Spidey-style



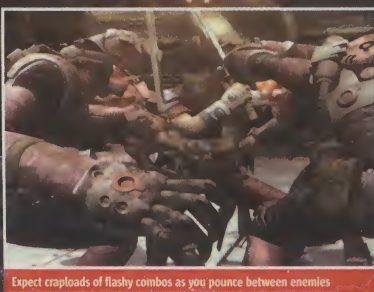
SEVENTH HEAVEN

A SUPER THICK SLICE OF SAMURAI DELIGHT COMING TO A PS2... SOMETIME SOON

So far Sammy Corporation has only revealed these tantalising new cut-scene images from Seven Samurai 20XX for PS2. But this month Planet CVG got cosy with the real thing up-and-running and we reckon it's gonna be a stormer.

You've probably guessed from the title that you get to go bananas with seven distinctive characters, a diverse crew of elite warriors who've banded together to protect the last human sanctuary in a world that's overrun with greedy evil fecks.

It's a stunning third-person slasher, offering lightning-fast combat and all the style of a Devil May Cry game, but with anime visuals. No hint of a UK release date yet, but we'll keep you posted.



Expect craploads of flashy combos as you pounce between enemies

Y'know what they say, big hands, big... gloves



gta=mos

ROCKSTAR'S NEW GTA GIANT ARRIVES IN TOWN AT THE END OF 2004. BUT WHICH TOWN? PLANET CVG ROUNDS UP THE PRIME SUSPECTS!

It's gonna bury Driv3R in a shallow grave and leave The Getaway 2 swimming with the fishes. The next Grand Theft Auto is already the most wanted, feared and notorious console game ever, and when it launches on PS2 at the tail end of 2004 it's destined to be completely untouchable.

However, there's heaps of mystery surrounding Tommy Vercetti's next crime spree, and one question is on everybody's lips... where's it set? This month Planet CVG assembles all the facts and investigates each possible location, giving you the first full low-down of what could be in store in each place.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Over the past year Internet forums and game sites have been sizzling with wild speculation on where the new GTA will take place. Then on 17 December 2003 Take Two, parent company to Rockstar, trademarked six new GTA names - GTA: 5, GTA: 6, Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas, Grand Theft Auto: Sin City and GTA: Bogota. A few days later Grand Theft Auto: Tokyo was registered. So there we have it. The four contenders: San Andreas, Sin City (aka Las Vegas), Bogota and Tokyo!

Examine the hard proof below in this screenshot from the United States Patent and Trademark Office website.

Trademark Electronic Search System (TESS)
 TESS was last updated on Sat Feb 7 04:55:29 EST 2004

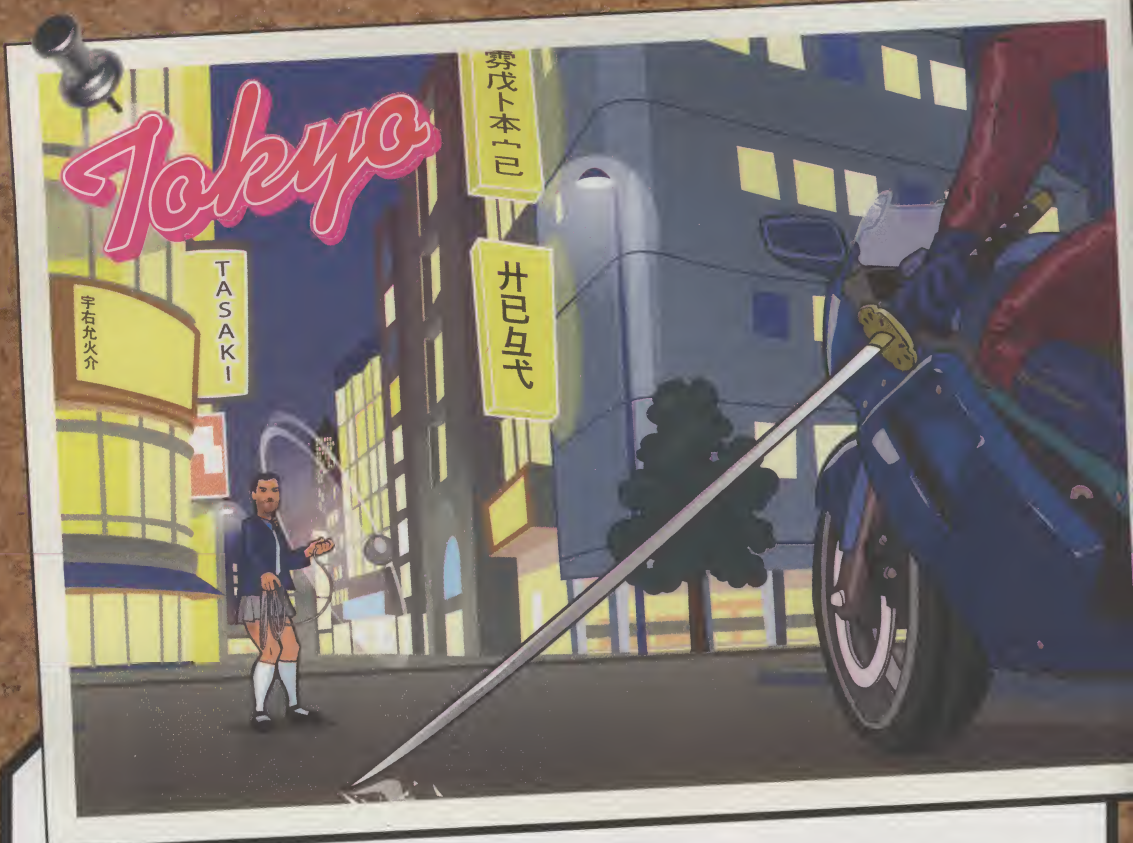
Search Results for: **GRAND THEFT AUTO: TOKYO**

Serial Number	Owner	Class	Mark	Check Status	Dead
1/181708	ROCKSTAR GAMES INC.	9	GRAND THEFT AUTO: TOKYO	LIVE	
2/181709	ROCKSTAR GAMES INC.	9	GRAND THEFT AUTO: BOGOTA	LIVE	
3/181710	ROCKSTAR GAMES INC.	9	GRAND THEFT AUTO: SIN CITY	LIVE	
4/181711	ROCKSTAR GAMES INC.	9	GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	LIVE	
5/181712	ROCKSTAR GAMES INC.	9	GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY	LIVE	
6/181713	ROCKSTAR GAMES INC.	9	GRAND THEFT AUTO: TOKYO	LIVE	

The cities listed have opened up a world of amazing possibilities for the GTA universe

Probably the wisest money is on San Andreas. Reason being that there were three areas in the original Grand Theft Auto for PlayStation back in 1997 - Liberty City, Vice City and you guessed it, San Andreas. Obviously, it's the only area from the '97 classic that hasn't been treated to a 3D makeover.

However Take Two's move to trademark San Andreas could be a total red herring. We reckon it's still definitely a four-horse race and no matter which city it turns out to be, you can be guaranteed that the next GTA is going to be the biggest riot ever to erupt on a console.



JAPAN'S MANIC METROPOLIS BARES ALL THE HALLMARKS OF GTA PARADISE

GTA games always surf the cutting edge of cool, making Japan's trend-setting capital the perfect location for Tommy's next urban rampage.

Plus if you want to talk organised crime, you've come the right place because the Yakuza is probably the most stylish, mysterious and fearsome crime outfit in the world. If shamed, they cut off they're own fingers with a Tanto blade!

Also, we know that Rockstar uses relevant Hollywood movies to influence the action in its games, like the chainsaw missions in Vice City which were inspired by a brutal scene from Miami-based cocaine flick Scarface. So chances are Rockstar will look to films like Kill Bill and classic Yakuza movie Black Rain to conjure up ideas for GTA: Tokyo.

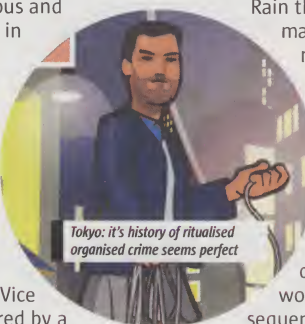
Just imagine a scene like the one in Kill Bill: Vol. 1 where

you've got to swordfight an army of Yakuza in a destructible ancient hall, followed by a fierce final showdown in a snow-covered courtyard!

BLACK RAIN AND CLARET STAINS

But there's one scene in Black Rain that we reckon would make an absolute killer moment in GTA: Tokyo.

A Yakuza rides a motorbike while dragging his sword along a concrete street, sparks flying, as he hunts down the hero and tries to cut off his head. This would make a blinding sequence mid-mission.



Tokyo: it's history of ritualised organised crime seems perfect

LAND OF THE RISING FUN

No doubt you'd be able to run wild within the capital's enormous neon skyscrapers and bustling shopping centres too. The scenery would be utterly jaw-dropping and there are

masses of diverse districts, ranging from the disgustingly seedy to royally posh. Ideal for a GTA game.

As for the soundtrack, we're betting that you'll be able to tune into insane radio stations that play all sorts of plinky-plinky J-pop and furious Japanese punk. Plus we've also heard rumours of that the next GTA will be compatible with PS2's hard disc - which is still to be released over here. The idea being that you can rip your CDs onto your machine (like in the Xbox version of Vice City) and grind to them in game.

We can see it now: Tommy in a Tokyo schoolgirl's uniform, driving mean Japanese motors through neon billboards before a spot of karaoke...

★ WANTED LEVEL

Tokyo's buzzing neon metropolis spews attitude and ballsy excitement. With the Yakuza on hand to turn things ultra nasty, this could be the definitive GTA experience.



Wanted



PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE

Word on the inside is that the action will most likely take place in the city of San Francisco, which lies in the heart of San Andreas area. Also we reckon that if Rockstar decides to set the next GTA here it'll take place in 1960s.

It was during this decade when Alcatraz maximum-security prison was in full use, located on a menacing island just off the coast. America's most dangerous and famous inmates were held there, like Al Capone. Surely Rockstar would cash in on this criminal hotspot, and exploit every avenue for missions revolving around The Rock. Tommy might have to initiate an intricate prison break, and considering that Alcatraz was deemed inescapable, this would be a spectacularly mammoth operation involving speedboats, clever distractions, disguises and hard-ass weaponry.

Back on the mainland you'd get to explore the sordid docks, Golden Gate Bridge and tear around San Francisco's famously outrageous streets. It boasts some of the steepest and windiest roads in the world, perfect for performing Insane Stunt Bonuses. Then there're the Earthquakes! The city lies on the San Andreas Fault line,

America's most vulnerable quake zone. Could be a phenomenal mixture of natural and unnatural disasters. If it does happen, it's going to go off the Richter scale, and blow us all to hell.

★ WANTED LEVEL

Insane street layouts and Alcatraz island! GTA: San Andreas is an amazing prospect, and with earthquakes kicking off all around, it'd send shockwaves across gaming's globe.



SCUM GET SOME! WELCOME TO HELL ON EARTH

Columbia's capital city doesn't exactly radiate glitz and glamour. On the contrary, it's the most uninviting and threatening of all four locations, famed for its drug trafficking, high profile assassinations, kidnapping and astronomic murder rate. So Tommy Vercetti should feel right at home then.

Only, Bogota isn't a high-rise metropolis, like the other three. It's a poor city built up of loads of scummy slum areas contrasted by big mansions peppering the local hillsides, where all the rich folk and drug lords kick back.

There's scope for claustrophobic alley fights and intense chase sequences in the narrow shantytown streets, and stealth possibilities for hilly woodland areas. Plus there's bound to be heaps of livestock roaming the streets, with pigs and chickens ideal for target practice. However, we're worried that there won't be many exciting vehicles and opportunities for

flamboyant action in such a rundown low-rise city. The slums would only house knackered old scooters and crappy cars, forcing you to head for the hills just to pick up a decent set of wheels.

Sure, it'd be fantastic if you could kidnap people and fight for control over different ghettos, but we reckon that Bogota isn't quite the land of opportunity that a crook like Tommy would really thrive in.

★ WANTED LEVEL

It's got the danger factor, but we're not sure if there'd be enough going on in the city to make it as thrilling a place to go nuts in as Tokyo, San Andreas or Sin City.



THE WORLD CAPITAL OF WINNERS AND SINNERS

Or Las Vegas as it's more affectionately known. This is a city built on greed, corruption, excess, high risks, high glamour and fun, fun, fun. Now we're in business!

If you've ever seen the Robert De Niro movie Casino then you'll understand why this gambler's paradise is such a tantalising location for Rockstar's upcoming biggie. Vegas is run by the mob, and there're all sorts of sickeningly outrageous scenes that would fit snugly into the GTA cosmos.

One sequence sees two marked mobsters driven away from the bright lights and out into the barren Nevada desert surrounding Vegas. They're beaten with baseball bats and buried alive! It's dead easy to envisage Tommy concealing bodies in the sand and giving victims premature dirt naps. This would be an awesome addition to GTA's gameplay structure – imagine if you had to make sure all

your victims' bodies were well buried, and couldn't be found. Especially if the police were constantly patrolling the out-of-town highways.

The city itself is rammed with giant casinos (each with vaults full of money begging to be robbed – just think Ocean's Eleven), amusement parks, enormous plush hotels and hookers galore. The opportunities are boundless. Life or death on the roll of a dice? We're in!

★ WANTED LEVEL

Rob the vault in Caesars Palace, bury someone alive in the desert and sabotage the rollercoaster in the New York New York hotel – all in the same evening? Oh yeah baby!



勝
自然



my creatures will never surrender. kaijudo.

ネ



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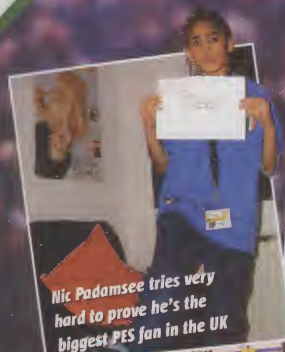
DS GETS SEGA GAMES

Sega has already received Nintendo DS development kits, and president Hisao Oguchi has confirmed that it will be creating games for its old rival's quirky handheld. It's also been reported in the Japanese press that Sega is working on PSP games as well.

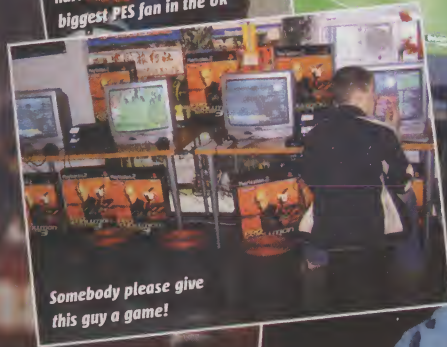


GOING COMMANDO

LucasArts has unleashed another beefy batch of screenshots from its upcoming Xbox and PC shooter Republic Commando. This latest Star Wars-themed thriller is still on track for a summer launch.



Nic Padamsee tries very hard to prove he's the biggest PES fan in the UK



Somebody please give this guy a game!



Older brother Marc Padamsee puts in some extra practice back home



Southend's Dan Yeates, looking suspiciously like he's poking his head around a door



Obviously a set of fancy new stools and tellies helps improve your scoring capability



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

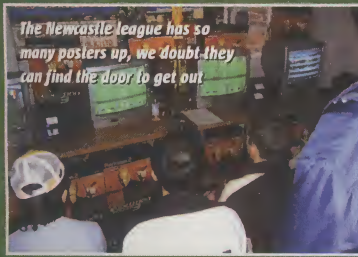


ROUND-UP:
JANUARY
FEBRUARY
2004

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CHUMPS INTO CHAMPS

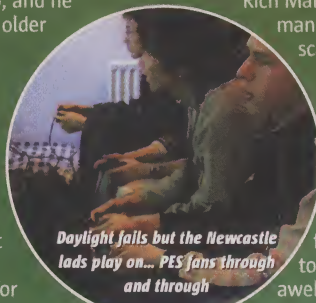
WHO LET THE UNDERDOGS OUT? THEY'RE BLOODY WINNING!



The Newcastle league has so many posters up, we doubt they can find the door to get out

It was the month that the underdogs bit the heels of champions, and where scorelines soared like kites. In Bath, two of the league's most exciting players, brothers Mikey and Keith Wheeler, hammered at Steve Godfrey's precarious position on top. It was Mikey who ended up robbing Steve of three points, closing the gap so that both brothers could end the day in the top three. Mikey could've gone second if it wasn't for one of the Bath league's minnows – Russell Edwards. He

could hardly believe his dramatic 4-3 win over Mikey, "I think he was a bit shocked that he'd lost," he smirked. Only one point separates the first and second positions in the Southend league. It's Nic Padamsee on top, and he owes his standing to his older brother's mischief. Marc Padamsee has only just started in the league, but was able to spoil Ross Stanley's weekend with a 3-0 spanking. Reigning champ David Sefah, competing from London's E4, hasn't been playing much recently. This is all cool for guys like Arif Ali, who's joint third in the nationwide league, but top of E4. Other players to watch out for here are Tarik Osman and Osman Idris, registering some devastating victories recently. It's gonna require dedication and nerve to topple guys like these, and the



Daylight fails but the Newcastle lads play on... PES fans through and through

Birmingham players have plenty to spare. Some lads fly over from Ireland to compete at the Global Gaming Arena. Guess with a name like that we shouldn't be surprised. Still, not enough to dislodge Rich Marsh from his roost – a man, they say, people are too scared to even play... Special mentions to the following as we wrap up for this month: Jonathan Francis in Cardiff, who is 15 points clear at the top of the Welsh table – 34 points from 12 games is a record to be feared. Also Khalid El-awel and Tim Adegbeye, battling to make their mark in the tightest group over in Harrow. And finally a big welcome to the Newcastle newbies, who started with a bang on February 7. The scorelines are amazing – check www.pesleague.co.uk and make sure you're sitting down!

Here for the night then, eh lads? Newcastle wears its dedication on its long satin sleeves

TOP OF THE LEAGUE

Behind the goggles is the hard gaze of a man dedicated to his art. In this photo, it's skiing we guess, but when it comes to videogames all his effort is poured into PES.

Shui Ip was recently Player of the Week on pesleague.co.uk for his uniquely calculating approach to the game. "I play according to how players play against me," Shui points out, "I respect everyone I play as anyone can beat anyone on the day."

Shui Ip, aka Ice Cold from now on, searching far and wide for PES secrets



Martin Turner, one of the Edinburgh League's finest, sent us this photo... scary, eh?

THE HOT SEAT



Lars Johansson, Chronicles Of Riddick Producer, sheds some light on Vivendi's Pitch Black prequel for Xbox



CVG: The Chronicles Of Riddick is the prequel to the movie Pitch Black. For those that may not be familiar with the series, please can you explain a little of the plot?

Johansson: The game begins with Riddick's arrival at Butcher Bay – the most notorious prison in the Galaxy. Butcher Bay is a Triple-Max correctional facility, and Riddick is sent there for a reason unexplained. The prison itself is divided into three different security ratings.

On the surface we have the Max facilities, underground is the Double Max, and finally, the 'Tower' has the highest security rating in the whole universe – the Triple Max classification. Riddick's one goal is to bust out and escape from this hellhole. It's all about getting out. And players will find that Riddick is not only a talented escape artist – but simply the best at what he does.

CVG: How long has the game been in development?

Johansson: Almost two years.

CVG: What new gameplay concepts or technology features does the game offer?

Johansson: In terms of gameplay, Riddick offers a hybrid of several genres. We have fast-paced action, stealth, adventure, exploration, and we've created a very unique first-person melee-fighting mechanic.

In terms of technology, Riddick will be using some of the most advanced console technology to date... many of the features that are making Doom 3, Halo 2, and Half-Life 2 such anticipated games

CVG: How do you plan to recreate the atmosphere of the movie in the game?

Johansson: Riddick ties heavily into the growing Pitch Black/Chronicles Of Riddick universe. Actors from both films are lending their talents to the game. And the game itself is told as a prequel to both films – diving deep into the back-story of Riddick himself. We tell the story of Riddick before Pitch Black and before The Chronicles Of Riddick. We



explore things like how Riddick got his eyes 'shined' and his relationship with the bounty hunter Johns.

CVG: Describe a typical mission.

Johansson: Get to the Mainframe! Riddick has to break out of a heavily guarded prison area in order to get to a DNA sampler machine that will allow him to use the prison assault rifles, which are DNA encoded – and shock anyone who isn't in the system. This will involve fighting and brutalising other inmates, trading money for prison weapons, killing guards for access codes, sneaking through monitored areas, and eventual firefights with guards that don't know they're already dead!

VIN DIESEL'S INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN PHENOMENAL

CVG: How do you think this movie licence will benefit gamers?

Johansson: The production team at VU Games would tell you this is the most heavily integrated project it's ever done. Vin Diesel's involvement has been phenomenal, and the co-operation and support of the film studio has been just as spectacular.

The benefit the licence has brought is it's allowed us to create more than just a game, but a piece of a larger puzzle and of a mythology that we're very excited about. We believe people will love The Chronicles Of Riddick, and we're very happy to be a part of that universe.

CVG: What makes Riddick stand out from the first-person action-adventure crowd?

Johansson: How amazing the game looks will initially get everyone's attention. But when people experience the gameplay, they're going to be very happy!

It's a very unique hybrid – the first-person fighting and way we've implemented it is unlike anything else on the Xbox.

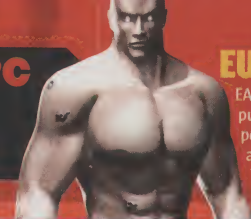
CVG: What aspect of the game are you most proud of?

Johansson: I have to say the visuals. It's just amazing what the super-talented artists have done with the technology that our ass-kicking programmers have put together.



TRUE CRIME PC

Activision's unveiled its LA crime-buster is going PC. Expect new online multiplayer options for four players, including street-racing, baddy-nabbing and fighting modes.



EURO BREAKDOWN

EA has inked a deal with Namco to publish its punchy off-the-wall first-person Xbox exclusive Breakdown, and said it'll be out here in June. With EA backing, it could be big.

UPDATE!



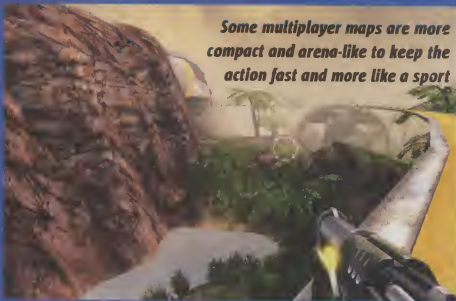
A new multiplayer ball game sees teams passing a ball around as they fight their way to the enemies' goal. Er, sounds like UT2k3's Bombing Run mode

We've learnt how one-player will teach you tactics like taking down generators to power down base defences – a trick that'll also make you a better team player online

We're a bit worried the fewer power-packs (just four) means less tactical depth

TRIBES VENGEANCE

PUKKA NEW SHOTS AND ALL THE LATEST HARD FACTS!



Some multiplayer maps are more compact and arena-like to keep the action fast and more like a sport

The styling of the new character models is wicked. Every bit of kit you pick up is visible and moves independently on your character



Check this new all-terrain monster motor. Equipped with thick body armour, multiple rockets, and 360° automatic gun turret. Wool!

Jetpacks have faster acceleration and are easier to control using directional 'drifting'



SHELF-LIFE 2

Is Half-Life 2 already past its sell-by date?

This month Valve director Doug Lombardi suggested that Half-Life 2 is now on track for release this summer, but as we all know H-L2 is slipperier than a buttered eel and has a habit of dodging release dates like Neo dodges bullets.

With this in mind, concern is rising in the games industry, because although Half-Life 2 looked streets ahead of anything a year ago, PC games are improving at such speed that it could look far less impressive by the time it goes on sale. Especially if it misses its summer release and falls back to spring 2005, as some sources suggest.

No doubt it'll still be utterly amazing, but with technologically dazzling shooters like Far Cry and Painkiller out well before H-L2, we're going to be a much harder crowd to please. Stay tuned for all the latest over the coming months.



That wall's not finished either

WHEREVER YOU MAY ROME

★ INVESTIGATE ANCIENT ROME'S SINISTER SIDE

Cop a load of the first shots of Capcom's PS2 exclusive, ancient actioner Shadow Of Rome.

You bowl around Italy's capital, racing chariots and fighting gladiators. Switch between a brawny soldier called Agrippa (fitting name for a man with strong hands!) and freed female gladiator Octavius, who slinks about in the shadows. Shadow Of Rome is due out here at the end of the year.



Win the crowd by hacking off limbs. They're so easily pleased



Whip your horses to get 'em galloping. Sounds a bit rude

RES EVIL 4 SLIPS

Last month we revealed Capcom's Resi nightmare would be out before the end of the year. Scratch that! Capcom is now saying that the Japanese and US versions will release at the end of 2004, but we'll have to wait till early 2005 for the UK version. Pants!



EURO 2004 KICK OFF

EA's official UEFA EURO 2004 game, out during the tourney finals in Portugal, has a new morale system that carries over from game to game, affecting individual player's abilities. It's on PS2, Xbox, GC and PC.



PS2 GETS ANOTHER PAINT JOB

Hot on the heels of its special silver PlayStation 2 at Christmas, Sony is soon to release a limited number of collectible Aqua coloured consoles. Cool blue!

XBOX LIVE THE REAL COST

MICROSOFT SLAPS A PRICE TAG ON YOUR GAMERTAG

Microsoft has finally revealed the price of online gaming for Xbox, and the good news is you won't have to flog any vital organs to afford it.

You'll have to pay a monthly fee of £4.99 once your free subscription runs out, or £39.99 for a year's-worth of online access – a saving of around 20 quid.

Newcomers to Xbox Live still receive a free 12-month subscription with the regular Starter Kit. These charges only apply after your year of free play is up.

If you're interested in playing Gotham 2 online and don't have Live yet, sort yourself out with Microsoft's new Xbox

Live Starter Kit bundle. It includes the game, headset and 12-month subscription all for £59.99. If you bought the regular Starter Kit and Gotham 2 separately it'll set you back £80.

Our only worry is that nothing's been mentioned about the cost of downloadable content, such as extra levels and new missions. Developers have already hinted that it won't be long before you'll have to fork out a single one-off payment for extra content. Stay tuned for more on the real cost of Xbox Live over the next few issues.



★ DOWNLOAD DOWNER

We're dying to know if and when the freebie downloadable extras will cease to exist entirely, and how they'll be priced. Quid for a new map? 20p for a new gun? It's anyone's guess at the moment, but guaranteed Planet CVG will be first with all the cold hard facts and filthy cusses

★ BONUS STUFF



Bag this lot for £59.99

TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS

★ UPDATE!

➤ You get to prance around Christmas Town

JACK EMPTIES HIS SACK

★ ... AND IT'S FULL OF SPOOKY SHOTS FROM CAPCOM'S PS2 FRIGHTENER

★ FLAME-GRILLED GHOULS



Exactly where does a skelle guff come from?



★ HAPPY HALLOWEENERS

➤ Expect some snappy but dark and even macabre dialogue from ol' Jack

★ TRICK OR TREAT?

➤ Who says the Atkin's Diet makes you look unhealthy? Look, it's Paris Hilton

DEAD OR ALIVE: CRONUS

★ IT'S OFFICIAL — CRONUS ISN'T REALLY DEAD OR ALIVE 4

Up till now the entire games industry assumed that Dead Or Alive: Cronus was to be the true sequel to Dead Or Alive 3. Well it's not, and it's not even a fighting game!

Temco bigwig Tomonobu Itagaki has revealed Cronus on Xbox will not be a beat 'em up, nor a sports game like Volleyball or an action adventure spin-off like Namco's upcoming Nina game. Cronus revolves around Kasumi and Ayane, but what's really bizarre is that Itagaki said that it's a game that explores "the innocence and cruelty of children".

Sounds like he's taken a few kicks to the head if you ask us. All we want is another beautiful bruiser that lets us watch busty lovelies thump the cack out of each other. Out later this year.



Playtime in the Bullseye

FIGHTING FOR SPACE ON CVG'S CONSOLES THIS MONTH

★ PS2 MOST PLAYED!



ANIMUSHA 3
We're spending as much time gazing like slack-jawed goons at Animusha 3's amazing intro as playing the damn thing. It's top-drawer demon-dicing that absolutely stinks of quality, and we're loving every zombie-filled minute of it.

★ XBOX MOST PLAYED!

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

We've had four Xboxes system-linked all month and been caning the multiplayer. It's frigg'n' tense no matter what side you're on. We're dying to take it online. Our only gripe is that it's only four-player.

★ CUBE MOST PLAYED!



MGS: THE TWIN SNAKES
It's easy to forget how blinding Metal Gear was on PSone, but since replaying this tasty revamped version we remember why it's such a classic. The action's not just cool. Like Andre 3000 from Outkast, it's ice cold!

★ GBA MOST PLAYED!

METROID ZERO MISSION

Be it plane, train or automobile, the new Metroid game is with us all the way. It's the perfect travel companion – exciting to be with and doesn't waffle on about the weather. A 30-minute blast before brekkie's the perfect start!

★ PC MOST PLAYED!



BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM
We've been playing two-on-two (Mike and Alex versus Pete and Graeme) with extra AI bots on either side, and it's properly mental. Pete's master of jets, and Alex terrorises the skies in his Apache. Mike and Graeme just like tussling in the tall grass and lotsa tunnel rat action.

Charts

UK TOP 20 BESTSELLERS

FIND OUT WHICH GAMES ARE FLYING OFF THE SHELVES AND WHICH ARE NOSE-DIVING INTO OBSCURITY, HOW THEY SCORED IN CVG AND WHAT WE RECKON TO THEM NOW

ChartTrack

The official UK weekly leisure software charts ©2002 ELSPA Ltd, compiled by ChartTrack, with the name ELSPA acting as a link to our website www.elspa.com

POSITION	MOVIE	GAME	FORMAT/S	CVG SCORE	SUMMARY	LAST WEEK	WEEKS IN CHART
1	→	NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND (EA)	PS2 XB GC	91%	We reckon EA's muscle car has been clamped by some officious warden, because it sure as hell ain't budging from the top slot in a hurry	1	1
2	↑	NORTON INTERNET SECURITY (NORTON)	PC	-	Norton's bug-basher is class for keeping you safe while downloading dodgy porn onto your hard-drive but it's rubbish in multiplayer	5	7
3	↓	FIFA 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB PC PSONE	79%	FIFA slips on its Predator boots and bends Pro Evo 3 out of the Top 20. Fifteen weeks in the charts and still on top of the game	2	15
4	↓	THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN (VIVENDI)	PS2 XB PC GC	67%	Hit and run my arse. We love Homer but The Simpsons have long outstayed their welcome in the charts as far as we're concerned	3	14
5	↓	THE LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING (EA)	PS2 XB PC GBA	70%	Let your strong, muscly thumbs off their leash for a spell of all-out button-bashing in this competent but soulless movie spin-off	4	12
6	RE ENTRY	MAFIA (TAKE 2)	PS2 PC	74%	The driving sections are so dull that you'll want to kill somebody in a violent and pitiless way - which is lucky because that's the point	-	4
7	↑	EYETOY: PLAY (SONY)	-	74%	Sony's PS2 party-starter shimmies back up the table in its silver disco sandals, beating its newborn Groovy cousin by ten places	9	31
8	↓	THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT (EA)	PS2 XB GC GBA	73%	Only the most patient control freak/stalker/serial killer will be able to cope with the ultra slow pace of life in Bustin' Out	7	7
9	↓	GRAND THEFT AUTO: DOUBLE PACK (ROCKSTAR)	PS2 XB	95%	Rockstar's dangerous duo is still making waves on PS2 and Xbox. No collection is complete without it and that is a true fact	6	6
10	↓	MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN (EA)	PS2 XB GC	65%	Looks like everyone is finally starting to realise what a half-baked effort this follow-up to Frontline really is. Y'see, even turds sink after a while	8	10
11	↑	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 03/04 (EIDOS)	PC	84%	Bugs fixed, stats updated, but it still looks like a telephone directory except not as interesting. Not that that'll put off Champ Man supporters	12	11
12	↑	TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB GC GBA	89%	Seen that crazy advert on the telly where Tiger hits some balls which land and balance on top of each other? It's bollocks, but his game rocks	13	15
13	↑	MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE (EA)	PS2 XB	85%	This is more like it! This budget re-release from Electronic Arts is a year old, but it still guns the crap out of Rising Sun. At that price, the better deal	15	51
14	RE ENTRY	GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY (ROCKSTAR)	PS2 PC	95%	Vice City enters the Platinum range, but if you haven't got it already you're probably mental or in prison. Or you might be dead	-	49
15	↓	TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND (ACTIVISION)	PS2 XB GC GBA	79%	So now you can drive cars and get off your board - not that you'd want to. Underground pollutes the purity of the Hawk's skating experience	10	15
16	↓	HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN (EIDOS)	PS2 XB	87%	Let's talk money. You can pick up this quality sneak 'n' shoot adventure for under a tenner. You'd be a nob not to. Total bargain	11	13
17	NEW	EYETOY: GROOVE (SONY)	PS2	60%	Groove doesn't so much make you want to reach for the stars as for the off switch. A dancing game that doesn't let you dance. Ack	-	1
18	→	THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS (EA)	PS2 XB GBA	66%	It's clear that the journey to Morrrr-dooooor is still an appealing voyage. Careful no-one pinches your ring while bending over the Crack of Doom	12	42
19	↓	TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA (ACTIVISION)	PS2 XB GC	77%	Proof - if you needed it - that size isn't everything. This one's massive but still no match for Vice City's action-packed streets of sin	14	19
20	↓	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB PC	-	Looks ain't everything - this is more handsome than other management games, but nowhere near as in-depth or addictive as Champ Man	17	8

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CVG MOST WANTED

1. ONIMUSHA 3 (PS2)

Graeme: "Onimusha's samurai action's always been great, and with Jean Reno shooting the merde out of demons Oni 3's gonna rock."

2. HALO 2 (XB)

Mike: "Sod PS2 online, I'm all about Xbox Live at the moment, and Halo 2's net-based multiplayer is bound to be the best team-based blasting on console."

3. KILLZONE (PS2)

Alex: "I'm not gonna diss Halo 2, but Killzone's weapons and vehicles look meaner. If the squad tactics and AI is on par with Halo 2, this is going to be an all-time classic."

4. VIRTUA FIGHTER 5 (AC)

Paul: "This reminds me how much I want a global VF.net to happen. Xbox is the way to go if this ever happens, fingers crossed..."

5. POKEMON LEAF GREEN/FIRE RED (GBA)

Lee: "The only way to complete your Pokémon collection on GBA, and you can do it with infrared doodads too. Who cares if they're remakes, they still rule over any other handheld RPG."

READERS' MOST WANTED

Daniel Redfield is nuts for driving games. He's clocked up over 160 hours playing Gotham 2 on Xbox Live... without a break!



1. GRAN TURISMO 4 (PS2)

"I bought Prologue on import. The Grand Canyon track is the best-looking course I've ever raced on. I just can't wait to get the real thing."

2. NEED FOR SPEED 2 (PS2)

"I've heard rumours it's coming out this year. The last one was amazing!"

3. TOCA RACE DRIVER 2 (XB)

"I love the idea of racing Aston Martins and trucks on the same track."

4. JUICED (PS2)

"The online team-based stuff sounds wicked. I'm there when it comes out."

5. FLATOUT (PS2)

"The damage modelling and physics are meant to be unbelievable."

Send us a photo of yourself and a list of the five games you're most excited about with 15 words on each explaining why.
Readers' Most Wanted, CVG, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 9 Dillington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. Email: mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk (subject: Most Wanted)



ICE COOL XBOX

Microsoft is launching a Crystal Limited Edition Xbox this spring. It's so much more stylish than the regular baby poo-coloured one, and comes with two controllers. You'll be able to pick one up for 139 quid.

CHAMP MAN LIVES!

Following the split from Sports Interactive (see p13), publisher Eidos has a new internal development team named Beautiful Game Studios. It's already begun work on Champ Man 5, set for release on PC this autumn.



RETURN OF THE PRINCE

Ubisoft has already made its decision to create a follow-up to its enchanting actioner Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time. As Ubi president Yves Guillemot stated in a recent interview: "A sequel is already being planned."

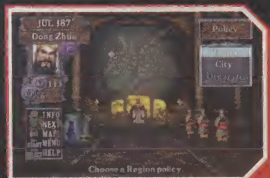
RELEASE DATES

CVG BRINGS YOU THE ULTIMATE CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP RELEASE SCHEDULE. MARK UP YOUR FAVES AND KEEP THIS LIST ON YOU AT ALL TIMES...

MARCH 2004

I WANT IT

XB	SPAWN ARMAGEDDON	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	SPAWN ARMAGEDDON	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	SPAWN ARMAGEDDON	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	PS TRAFFIC	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	PTO IV	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GBA	SAMURAI WOLF	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	MOJO	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	UNREAL II: THE AWAKENING	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	LMA MANAGER 2004	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	LMA MANAGER 2004	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	CONAN	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	MERCEDES-BENZ WORLD RACING	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	BARBARIAN	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	GLASS ROSE	MARCH 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	MIDNIGHT NOWHERE	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	DR SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	DR SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	DR SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	DR SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	DR SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	MUSICAL QUEST 3 WITH MICKEY 7 DONALD	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	SWAT GENERATION PACK	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	DISNEY'S HIDE N SNEAK	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	FORBIDDEN SIREN	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	SOCOM II	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	MTX: MOTOTRAX FEATURING TRAVIS PASTRANA	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	MTX: MOTOTRAX FEATURING TRAVIS PASTRANA	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	MTX: MOTOTRAX FEATURING TRAVIS PASTRANA	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	TENCHU: RETURN FROM DARKNESS	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	BLOWOUT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	THE SIMS 2	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	AUTO MODELISTA US TUNED	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	CARVE	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	SACRED	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	SCOOBY DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	SCOOBY DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	BREED	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	HARVEST MOON: IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	HARVEST MOON: IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	PARADISE CRACKED	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	KNIGHTSHIFT	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	MONSTER MONSTERS UNLEASHED	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	SPARTAN	MARCH 19	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	RIDING SPIRITS 2	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	R: RACING	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	R: RACING	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	R: RACING	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	BATTLE MAGES	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	RAINBOW SIX 3	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	VICTORIA	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	DEAD MAN'S HAND	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>



History plus maths equals brain spasms. But if you're hardcore enough you won't find a more engrossing RTS on PS2



Re-recorded dialogue, new cut-scenes, remixed music and bosses behaving differently - unmissable for GC owners

HOT PICKS

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THESE SIZZLING NEWCOMERS IN YOUR LOCAL GAMES SHACK



Average multiplayer dungeon 'em up, with a story like something out of a Romany recruitment pamphlet



Sporting smooth, vibrant visuals and a dynamic soundtrack, this could be one to get your noodles in a twist over



Sexier than Cat Deeley doing the nude spread-eagle, even if the only nakedness is blood-streaked man-torsos

PC	DEAD MAN'S HAND	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	.HACK//INFECTION	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	ENTER THE MATRIX - PLATINUM	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VIII	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VIII	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VIII	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	DRAKE OF THE 99 DRAGONS	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	TRIVIAL PURSUIT UNHINGED	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	TRIVIAL PURSUIT UNHINGED	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	BEYOND DIVINITY	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	PRO RUGBY MANAGER	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	R-TYPE FINAL	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	MX UNLEASHED	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	MX UNLEASHED	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	LORD OF THE REALM	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	FAR CRY	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	ROBOCOP	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	ROBOCOP	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	CONAN	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	CONAN	MARCH 26	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	BLACK HAWK DOWN DELUXE EDITION	APRIL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>

APRIL 2004

I WANT IT

GC	POKEMON CHANNEL: TOGETHER WITH PIKACHU	APRIL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	WORLD WAR ZERO: IRONSTORM	APRIL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	SINGLES: FLIRT UP YOUR LIFE	APRIL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	ALL STAR BASEBALL 2005	APRIL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	AQUANOX	APRIL 2	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	THE SUFFERING	APRIL 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	THE SUFFERING	APRIL 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	RICHARD BURNS RALLY	APRIL 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	RICHARD BURNS RALLY	APRIL 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	RICHARD BURNS RALLY	APRIL 6	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	KNIGHTS OF THE TEMPLE	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	ALIAS	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	ALIAS	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	ALIAS	APRIL 9	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	RISE TO HONOUR	APRIL 16	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	TRANSPORT GIANT	APRIL 23	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	VIETNAM	APRIL 23	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	AQUANOX	APRIL 23	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	SYBERIA 2	APRIL 30	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	EURO 2004	MAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/>

MAY 2004

I WANT IT

XB	EURO 2004	MAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	EURO 2004	MAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN	MAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN	MAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	FIGHT NIGHT 2004	MAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	VAN HELSING	MAY 14	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	VAN HELSING	MAY 14	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	HARRY POTTER: PRISONER OF AZKABAN	MAY 28	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	HARRY POTTER: PRISONER OF AZKABAN	MAY 28	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	HARRY POTTER: PRISONER OF AZKABAN	MAY 28	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	HARRY POTTER: PRISONER OF AZKABAN	MAY 28	<input type="checkbox"/>
GXA	HARRY POTTER: PRISONER OF AZKABAN	MAY 28	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	OBSCURE	MAY 28	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA	JUNE 1	<input type="checkbox"/>

JUNE 2004

I WANT IT

PS2	DRIV3R	JUNE 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	DRIV3R	JUNE 1	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	FAIR STRIKE	JUNE 4	<input type="checkbox"/>
GC	MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR	JUNE 16	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC	GROUND CONTROL II: OPERATION EXODUS	JUNE 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
PS2	SHREK 2	JUNE 25	<input type="checkbox"/>
XB	SHREK 2	JUNE 25	<input type="checkbox"/>

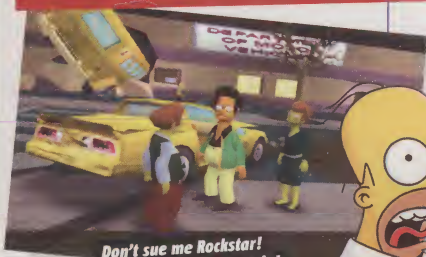
RELEASE DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

MAILBAG

SEE THAT CVG TIPS
NURSE? SHE'S
TOUCHED MY SACK



Opinions are like assholes – everyone's got one. Send us yours! Not your asshole, fool.
Mailbag, CVG, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 0BQ



Don't sue me Rockstar!
Thank you, come again!

SHIT AND RUN?

I recently starting playing The Simpsons Hit & Run and I think the idea is complete bollocks. What's the point in ripping off brilliant games like Crazy Taxi or Grand Theft Auto and turning them into a cheesy Simpsons remake? Just because they can't think of their own ideas doesn't mean they have to use other people's.

Michael, Stretford

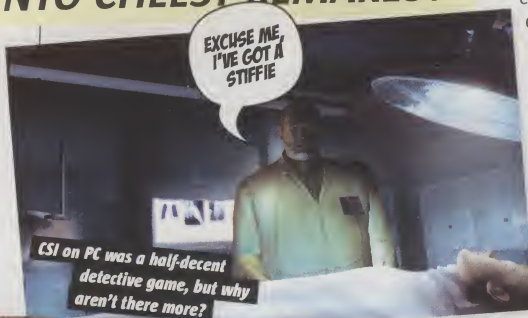
CVG Sega has already filed a lawsuit against EA claiming its earlier Road Rage game was infringing on the Crazy Taxi game concept. Makes you wonder whether anyone at Rockstar's been talking to lawyers about Vivendi's effort...

MONEY TALKS

It really annoys me that people say games are too expensive. These people usually compare games to DVDs but the two are incomparable. DVDs are brought out after the film has been released in the cinema so are essentially extra revenue, whereas the only revenue from games is through sales. People must see that games nowadays have massive budgets and usually last much longer than the average DVD. Stop complaining!

Vishal, via email

"WHAT'S THE POINT IN RIPPING OFF BRILLIANT GAMES AND TURNING THEM INTO CHEESY REMAKES?"



EXCUSE ME,
I'VE GOT A
STIFFIE

CSI on PC was a half-decent
detective game, but why
aren't there more?

CVG Yeah, you're getting much more content for your cash, but E40 is still a lot of money however you look at it. Unless you're loaded and then you're probably looking at it through some gold-plated binoculars balanced on the pert arse of a scantily clad servant girl. You lucky, lucky buggers.

PLAYING WITH YOUR DICK

I was wondering why we haven't seen any decent detective games recently. I know there are point-and-click games like CSI and BladeRunner but what about a game based around films like Se7en or Narc? I'd love to be investigating murders, interrogating suspects, going through police archives – with

rooftop chases, shoot-outs and high speed car chases to keep the action up. You could even have online options like downloadable crimes and suspects – stuff like that.

Anthony, via email

CVG Considering the success of TV shows like 24 it's a bit weird that there are so few detective games about, but check out Fahrenheit on page 39. You get to be the cop AND the criminal!

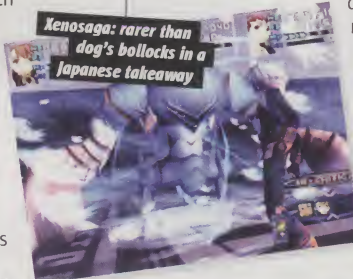
work fellas. As for PSP, you won't be able to put data onto UMDs. But we have heard rumours that Sony's bringing out mobile phone and digital camera peripherals, making the PSP the best thing since Chow Mein Pot Noodles.

THE DOG'S BOLLOCKS

Seriously, are Monolith Soft on drugs, or is CVG messing with our heads? About a year ago, Xenosaga was set to be released here in PAL land – it wasn't. Now, ONE WHOLE YEAR LATER, you say Xenosaga is one of the things to look out for in 2004! Come on, please don't put rubbish like that in your mag. Xenosaga on PAL is not gonna happen, and if it

did you'd see me first in line in a Japanese takeaway ordering dogs bollocks. Provide the facts next time please – and not the hype.

Annon, via email



Xenosaga: rarer than
dog's bollocks in a
Japanese takeaway

CVG To be fair we did have it at number 81, just behind World Championship Nipple Tweaking, so it's not as if we're busting our nuts over it. But the fact is that three years after the US release Xenosaga IS on the PAL horizon. How do you take your bollocks, mate? Extra wasabi?

SWORD OF TRUTH

In response to Michael's whining about CVG's Broken Sword review, 6/10 was the mark it deserved. The graphics were shoddy, the story was short and limp and don't even get me started on the ending!

Let's hope the good marks in other magazines will encourage another Broken Sword game and that the truthful comments and score in CVG will push the development team to make it a lot better.

Anthony, via email

CVG Even games mags couldn't agree on Broken Sword – some thought the sun shone



CVG STINKER

LOVES ZELDA, HATES GRANNIES

I think they could have made The Wind Waker a much better game. For instance, Zelda was a pirate and you even had a grandma! Worst of all was basing it on the ocean – it was soooooo boring sailing everywhere. It was good to see Link cel-shaded. I'm hoping that the next game will be too, but with a better storyline – then I want to see a cool, realistic Link!

Munogee

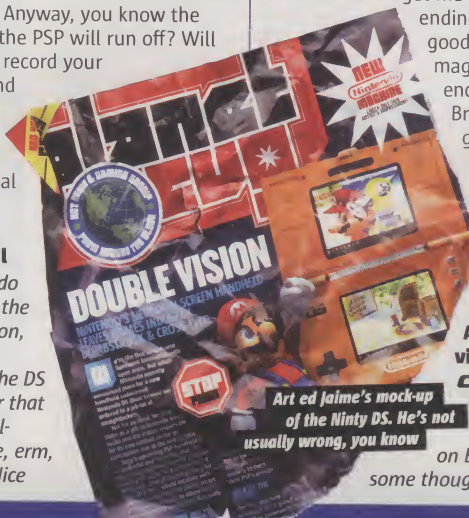
CVG Let's get this straight then. The next Zelda game should be cel-shaded except for Link, have no oceans and, above all, no grannies. Granny CVG's not too pleased: "Tell that little turd to take his letter and shove it up his arse. Staying for a cuppa then?" No thanks Granny, we love you but you smell of piss.

MOCK-UP COCK-UP?

Your mock-up of the new Ninty DS looks the same as the one you did of the GBA when that was coming out. To be fair though, you weren't too far off the mark with that one. Anyway, you know the UMD thingies the PSP will run off? Will you be able to record your own movies and stuff on them? And will I be able to look at digital photographs on PSP?

Dev, via email

CVG Nintendo seems to think the DS is a revolution, so Jaime's impression of the DS was a reminder that they had a dual-screen machine, erm, 20 years ago. Nice

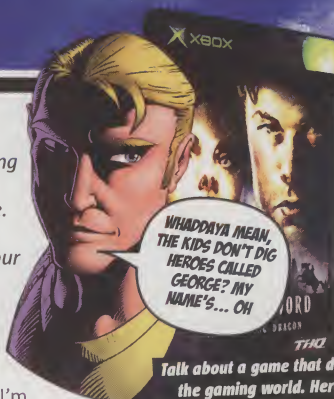


Art ed Jaime's mock-up
of the Ninty DS. He's not
usually wrong, you know

out of its arse but they were wrong. It's interesting that Broken Sword has provoked so much debate. Don't hold back – let us know what you think of our review scores!

ONE IN THE EYETOY

EyeToy? What a crunk of shit. "Wow, I can see myself on the TV screen, I'm beating up some ninjas!" I suppose the games will stay like that until people get the idea of... well, if I was to put it into words it would be like this: "Swisswooo, ee ee ee ee, owww owwwwww, hubba



Talk about a game that divided the gaming world. Here's the final verdict: it's not that good

much as we like grundy movies, is pretty unlikely. We can't really see EyeToy: Fist on the shelves, can you? Still, we're a bit disillusioned with Sony's wee camera too – it seemed like a good idea at the time but it's a bit dull really.

hubba!" Until then, I put EyeToy in the same category as the N-Gage. **Dunpeal, via email**

CVG Right. We THINK you're suggesting using EyeToy for porn, which, as

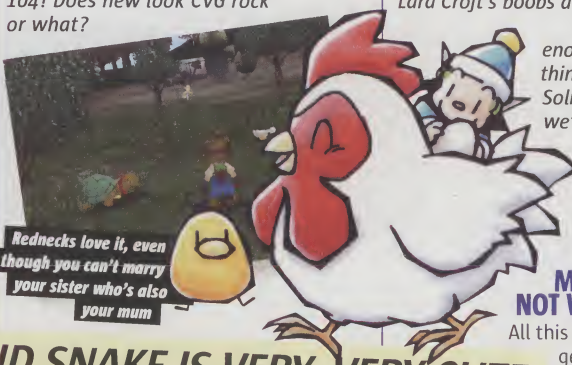
NO FARM, NO FOWL

Is it just me, or is delaying Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town a day or two before it's due for release

a bit wrong? I'm sure there are a lot of angry gamers out there that need justification for this. Also, I too believe you should do a new list of great games because it would be interesting to see how my favourite games fare.

Mattioo, via email

CVG Tell us about it, we were so disappointed we almost choked on a bit of straw. The new release date is March 26 though. And as for a list of CVG's top games... check out page 104! Does new look CVG rock or what?



"SOLID SNAKE IS VERY, VERY CUTE AND I WOULD LOVE TO HAVE SOME EYE CANDY OF HIM"

GET YOUR SNAKE OUT

Male gamers get lots of eye candy (like Lara Croft) while us girls get nothing. I'm a huge fan of Metal Gear Solid – I think Solid Snake is very, very cute and would love to have some eye candy of him. Talking of eye candy, Gamezville is great.



GAME COMPANIES: GET A XXXXING CLUE

I am something of a minority in the games-playing world: a female gamer. Why are there so few of us? Some would argue it's because of the violence in games, but I know girls who enjoy action films as much as any bloke. I also feel

insulted by the implication that girls only appreciate games based around shopping, dancing or other 'girly' activities. Someone should tell the games companies to get a clue. There's 50 per cent of the population that they can get money out of, yet they don't even bother to try.

Becky, via email

Spot on Becky, but how many girls do you know that would touch a joypad with a shitty stick? Games like Dance Dance Revolution and EyeToy have done so well because you don't need to be into games to play them. And aiming these at girls isn't a bad thing because if they have fun they're more likely to try something else, right? What do our other female readers think?



WINNER

Each month's star letter-writer wins £150 to spend at Cex. Cex is the place to trade in your old games, DVDs and consoleS for new, or sell them for unbeatable cash pay-outs. With games starting from £3, the winner could get 50 games! Visit www.cex.co.uk for more info.

SHORT & CURLIES

THE STUFF WE VICIOUSLY CUT TO SHREDS

Will there be a Pro Evo game on Xbox? The official position is no, but we reckon it's on the cards.

Is there a PAL version of Animal Crossing? Not yet, although we've heard whispers that it's coming.

Why is it that you forget to mention which console has the best version of a multiplatform game?

We do if it's worth it but most have identical features. Safe bet? Xbox.

What's happened to Resident Evil 4? It's due out in Japan at the end of the year but not here till 2005. Gargh!

In answer to Sanu's letter about second-person perspective... It would be through the eyes of the person you're shooting. Rubbish.

Rubbish indeed. So what's fourth-person perspective?

Cackman staged his own death to sign up with M&M as the yellow guy. He's got the same shoes and everything.

No danger – we paid him far too much in high-class hos and bacon crisps. He's dead, damn it! When will the pain end?

I reckon Bill Gates hit Cackman with an Xbox to kill him.

Gatesy was unavailable for comment which is more than a bit suspicious.

Darren Malcolm and Jamie Atiko are the coolest presenters ever and the Guru is hilarious. So, all of you gamers out there who hate it, give it some credit.

Melissa, Mexborough

CVG Eye candy? Melissa, do you think we're all sad gits with nothing better to do than look at Lara Croft's boobs all day?

Actually, fair enough. And we can think of at least two Solid Snake gags but we're too mature for that. As for Gamezville, we're still not sure. What do you all think?

MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR

All this console war crap is getting out of hand. I have all three consoles under my roof (the Xbox is my bro's). Here's the dillio: Xbox – this is really hard for me to say 'cos I used to hate the

Xbox but here goes... best graphics (man, I need a drink). GameCube – best load times. Look at the load times on Zelda considering the size of the game (nice one Ninty). PS2 – a good mixture of the two. My verdict? Decide which one of the above suits you and go for that

console. Let's just all live in peace, man.

Hodgkins, via email

CVG That's the best commentary on the state of the console wars we've heard for ages, undermined slightly by your 'advantage' of the GameCube. Best load times?

Seriously, you're hardly going to choose a Cube because it loads quicker, are you? And PS2 is "a good mixture of the two?" Mate, that comment is so insightful you should run for Prime Minister.

Let's move on – there's a whole new battle about to begin in the console war. Check out our next-gen machines feature on page 51 and let us know what side you're taking!

MAILBOMBS!

Cat got your tongue? Wanna say something but can't think what to talk about? Try these.

This month's hottest topics:

- GIRL GAMERS: do they exist?
- PRICE OF GAMES: cheap as chips?
- GAMEZVILLE: the shiznit or bit shit?
- EYETOY: PornToy?

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CHALLENGE CVG

Atten-shun! CVG teams up with Xbox Live and Counter-Strike to shoot the crap out of videogame terrorists everywhere!

CVG FIGHTS THE WAR AGAINST TERRORISM!



CHALLENGE RULES

Three ten minute rounds on the Prodigy, Matt and Mansion levels. Two players are terrorists and two are counter-terrorists. The player with most overall kills wins an Xbox, Live Starter pack and a copy of Counter-Strike and Top Spin Tennis! Terror-ific!

Grazza's bread and water face - we've got him on a 'no win, no wage' contract



GRAEME 'SHOOTING BLANKS' BOYD
CVG'S ONE-MAN ARMY

VS



JOHN 'SMART BOMB' SMART
BORN TO KILL

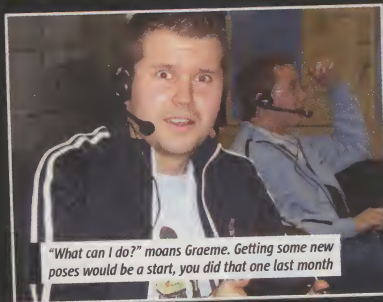


DAVE 'WAR CRIMES' BRAZIER
SADGAM NO-TACHE



BOBBY 'BODYBAGS' CLARKE
CAN'T WE GET ALONG?

TEAM CVG VS CHELTENHAM DEATH SQUAD



"What can I do?" moans Graeme. Getting some new poses would be a start, you did that one last month

shotgun, giving the wall behind them a nice coat of arterial blood.

Graeme pulled a couple of kills back with two impressive headshots, but this was Bobby and Dave's round. First blood to the terrorists.



One cool kill and he thinks he's ace. "Tell them about the knife!" he kept squealing. You LOSER!

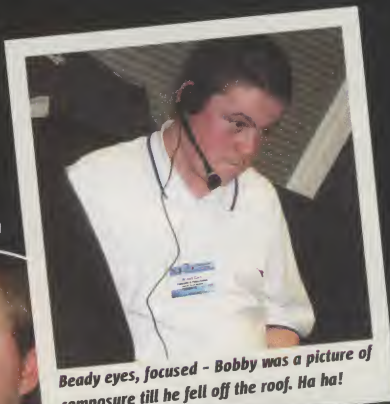
Hide your face Davey-boy, you've joined the knife-in-the-head Hall of Shame!

Standings:

- Dave: 5 kills ■ Bobby: 6 kills
- John: 3 kills ■ Graeme: 5 kills

ROUND 2 - THAT'S KNIFE

We don't remember much about Round Two because we were laughing far too hard at the Charlie Chaplain meets Rambo slapstick humour it produced.



Beady eyes, focused - Bobby was a picture of composure till he fell off the roof. Ha ha!

It was the mother of all Counter-Strike kills. Graeme spots Dave sneaking up onto the same roof, follows quietly behind him, whips out his knife and stabs him in the back of the head! But wait, Bobby's snuck up behind Graeme and he's just about to... holy monkeys! He's done a Rod Hull and slipped off the roof to his death! What a gimp! Who said horrific violence couldn't produce moments of high comedy?

Standings:

- Dave: 10 kills ■ Bobby: 9 kills
- John: 6 kills ■ Graeme: 11 kills

ROUND 3 - DAVE'S GONE APESHIT!

Smelling victory amongst the gunpowder Graeme started shooting off his mouth. "True Counter-Strikers like me don't even count kills unless they're headshots or a knife in the back of the nut..."

But an aim that made Muhammed Ali's hands look steady meant Graeme was struggling to up his bodycount. Dave, meanwhile, had turned into a killing machine. In a killing spree that made Charles Manson's trail of death look like a bit of harmless fun, Dave racked up seven straight kills without even suffering a flesh wound! Graeme, Bobby and John could hardly even compete. The spoils of war go to Dave! *

Final standings:

- Dave: 17 kills ■ Bobby: 10 kills
- John: 8 kills ■ Graeme: 12 kills



Will Graeme ever win an Xbox Challenge? His Game & Watch broke so now he's down to marbles and a hubcap

CHALLENGE CVG WINNER
WINNER: DEATH SQUAD
CHALLENGE CVG WINNER

RESULT CVG LOSE - AGAIN!

What have we learned here? Two things - getting knifed in the back of the head is the strongest motivation we've ever seen, and shooting lots of people (while fun and entertaining) does turn you into a mentalist.

"Yes! I'm the Terminator!" yelled Dave, driven by some dark insatiable bloodlust. "Give me my Xbox before I kill you all!"

So we did give him his Xbox because we were becoming quite scared. He also scooped a Live Starter Pack, a copy of Counter-Strike and Top Spin Tennis! Bobby and John made off with a Live Starter Pack and copies of the games too. Sweet or what?

That's two defeats on the trot for CVG whipping boy Graeme. Are you next in line to thump his pale Scottish hide? Cut out that there coupon and make it happen!

Oh yeah, massive thanks to our pals at Microsoft for letting us use their wicked games room for the Challenge.

CHALLENGE CVG AND XBOX LIVE THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE DREAM TEAM!

Next month is the last Xbox Live challenge so get entering - though we will of course still be taking on all-comers on all formats in later issues! You don't need to have Xbox Live to take part - we'll smuggle you into Microsoft's top-secret gaming bunker! Just fill this in, get your parent or guardian to sign it, and send it in right now! DO IT!

REMEMBER YOU DON'T NEED LIVE! AT HOME TO ENTER!

★ HELLO, MY NAME IS: (nickname) (age)

★ BUT YOU MUST CALL ME ★ AND I'M (game name)

★ I AM THE BEST AT:

★ MY ADDRESS IS:

★ DAYTIME TELEPHONE NO: ★ EVENING TELEPHONE NO:

★ EMAIL:

LEMONS!



THERE IS NO HIDING PLACE
YOU ARE THE NEW
SCREAMIN' FRUIT
WINDERS



OUT: NOV TBC
PLAYERS: 1-24* PUB: MICROSOFT
* DEV: BUNGIE
* WWW.BUNGIE.NET
* ONLINE: YESOUT: NOV TBC
PLAYERS: 1-12* PUB: SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
* DEV: GUERRILLA
* WWW.PLAYSTATION.CO.UK
* ONLINE: YESCOMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES
CVG
SHOOT 'EM UP APOCALYPSE!HALO 2
If you thought the carnage in Halo was awesome, trust us, it's going to get much, much better...KILLZONE
The level of destruction in Killzone's levels is impressive. Hope they had insurance

Halo 2 VS Killzone

Can you feel it? Halo 2 and Killzone are preparing for the most intense console conflict ever seen!

Put it this way. If we were only allowed to play two games this year and everything else evaporated into a fog of war, we'd head straight to the front line and choose Halo 2 and Killzone.

These two shooters are just about the most exciting things to happen in console gaming EVER. For Microsoft and Sony this is the last stand, the final push. It's the console apocalypse.

Halo 2 is the evolution of Xbox's weapon of mass destruction, the game that redefined console shooters and made us take Microsoft seriously. Killzone is

the result of the Sony war machine in overdrive, desperate to repel the enemy.

In recent weeks we've been bombarded with fresh information and hot new screens for both games. Multiplayer? Vehicles and weapons? Gameplay? You betchya ass, we got it all. Bolt on your bullet-proof vest – CVG's gonna take you right into the crossfire.

WEAPON OF CHOICE

Halo 2 picks up where the original left off. Master Chief has defeated the

Covenant ground forces, destroyed the Flood and obliterated the Halo space weapon, but his greatest challenge lies back on Earth. The Covenant have invaded and humanity is under siege!

But, hey, you're Master Chief, the biggest badass first-person shooters have ever seen – and that's the most awesome thing about Halo 2: it makes you feel invincible.

Until you come up against the new enemies. You're manning the gun on a Warthog. Suddenly a Covenant Transporter swoops overhead, the cargo doors open, and six huge, gorilla-looking

bastards covered in armour jump out. One lands square on the Warthog's bonnet. With one swipe the marine driving the vehicle is sent spiralling onto the rushing tarmac. You leap to avoid the next blow, readying your assault rifle as your feet touch ground. The Warthog swerves blindly into hard concrete, but the brute isn't done yet. Get ready to stove his head in with the butt of your rifle, but remember – there's five more breathing down your neck too...

APOCALYPSE NOW

If Halo 2 is the far future, then Killzone is just around the corner. There's no aliens or laser guns spewing sparkly plasma. There's only the next pile of rubble or next blood-flooded trench. This is REAL war, a full-on, gut-spilling and pus-gushing recreation of the holocaust of battle. We've been hands-on with it and it's INTENSE.

You play as an ISA soldier battling against the invading Helghast. There will be four characters to choose from, but only two have been revealed: Templar, an all-round marine, and Luger, a stealth expert. Expect a heavy weapons hardass and a sniper as well.

The first thing you notice is the sound. It's everywhere, rattling off walls and ringing in your ears, the incessant

HALO 2
Master Chief gets some new armour, says BungieHALO 2
Your first sight on touching down in New Mombasa – marines maimed in the fight. Doesn't fill you with confidence...KILLZONE
Tension, paranoia, a warm, sticky lump in your pants... Welcome to the KillzoneHALO 2
Since you're back on Earth, you can rely on air support in a sticky situation...HALO 2
...So a marine calls it in. You have to hold the position, and then BABOOM! Have that ya beetle-butt gimps!

MULTIPLAYER

Marines now take a more pro-active role in kicking Covenant ass – sometimes they even lead the attack

All weapon reloads are realistic – so the bigger the firepower, the longer the wait

There's loads more vehicles to command. We can't wait to try out a fast ATV or the Covenant's massive Phantom!

Expect huge multiplayer team battles on specially designed levels. Bungie are testing it online already – lucky buggers!

HALO 2

Two words to get you excited about Halo 2's multiplayer: Xbox Live. Bungie have made it clear they want seriously HUGE online battles.

We believe as many as 12-on-12, and Covenant versus human multiplayer battles have been confirmed, so you might even get to play as an Elite or a Grunt! Of course, co-op will be in there too.

Plus, the new version 3.0 of Xbox Live has in-built support for clans, so you'll be able to form teams, customise your armour, and show your stats to the world!

You'll get to man the gun while a marine takes the wheel. Keep your eyes peeled – ambushes blaze from every angle

VS

Imagine battling for position on an urban map this size. It's gonna be the ultimate guerrilla warfare blast!

KILLZONE

CVG can exclusively reveal that Killzone's multiplayer will be called Battlefields and include a selection of modes like Capture the Flag and Deathmatch.

The maximum number of online players will be 12. USB headset compatibility is also confirmed, plus there'll be a whole bunch of team options, and (as SOCOM has proved) PS2 can support clans pretty well too.

And it's not just online multiplayer thrills either – two players can play offline with ten bots making up the numbers. Simply awesome!

You should be able to play as ISA or Helghast troopers. We reckon it'll be a lot like Counter-Strike

pounding of gunfire stripped of action movie polish and screaming with rage. Then two enemy jets howl across your position. It's time to advance. It's the scariest, most intimidating thing in the world made ruthlessly unavoidable, a weird mixture of paralysing fear and motivating adrenaline. Every step is saturated with tension and paranoia.

A flash to the left: Helghast troops advancing on you, co-ordinating their movements with horrifying intelligence to flush you out. It's you or them. You rush

out, assault rifle spitting fury, and come face-to-face with the enemy. His eyes glow sinister orange behind his gas mask and his body jerks as the bullets chew into his flesh. Congratulations: you've survived another thirty seconds in the Killzone.

TWO TRIBES

We're on the verge of the next generation of consoles. Gamers'll soon be choosing their allegiance, signing up to fight in the trenches of the console war. Halo 2 and Killzone are the conscription calls.

Halo 2 has the advantage. It has a legacy of conquest behind it and doesn't need to prove itself on the battlefield. We GUARANTEE you it is going to punch you in the guts and poke you in the eyes with the clout of a cruise missile.

Killzone is the underdog. It's an unknown quantity, the green soldier fresh out of training camp. From what we've experienced it's well prepared for the conflict. But worth is proved in the furnace of battle – it could end up a hero, or it could end up in a bodybag.

Here at CVG we know one thing – the war between Halo 2 and Killzone is just beginning and it's going to be the most intense console conflict ever. It's time to choose your side...



ALERT! INCOMING!

Get your head down soldier, you're about to be blown away by a heavy artillery barrage of fact shells! Turn the page for searing hot info on:

WEAPONS ■ ENEMIES ■ VEHICLES
ENVIRONMENTS ■ ENEMY AI

WEAPONS



Your trusty assault rifle now comes fitted with a scope – perfect for long-range blasting!

You can batter Helghast with the butt of your rifle but really artistic (i.e. bloody) melee kills are done with the knife

VS

HALO 2

Halo 2 keeps the two-weapon restriction to your inventory but makes up for it by letting you fire both weapons simultaneously using the left and right triggers!

Imagine blasting an Elite's shield with a plasma rifle and then peppering his body with an assault rifle! We've seen new weapons like the rapid-fire SMG and laser-scoped assault rifle, and we're positive a flamethrower will feature after it appeared on the PC version of the original.

And if you're a fan of up-close-and-personal Covenant-kicking, Halo 2's going to let you combo melee attacks into skull-splitting sequences!

Master Chief also has two new combat moves. He can lower his weapon and sprint to get out of a tight spot, or peek around corners. How cool?

The SMGs chuck out lead with a cool BRATBRATBRAT sound

Halo 2's all-new SMG. You can double up for two-handed blasting!

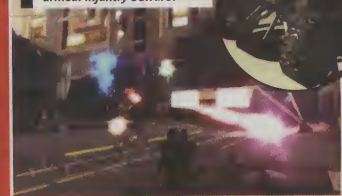
VEHICLES

HALO 2

New Covenant motors like the huge Phantom assault ships look the bomb, but the new marine vehicles are driving us nuts!

Super-fast ATVs, all manner of Warthog variants (even with tank-tracks!), and Chiefy can even leap aboard and jack Ghosts!

The Phantom's fast and heavily armed. Infantry beware!



KILLZONE

You can't pilot vehicles in Killzone, but the Helghast have loads so the drone of an engine has never had such terrifying significance.

You might've battled for ages to hold a position, only for swooping troop carriers to unload hordes of fresh cannon-fodder. Expect tanks, jets, and a steam-rolling troop-carrier!



You'll come up against loads of Helghast vehicles. Some you destroy, others you'll just have to avoid

KILLZONE

Killzone features 25 weapons based on real technology, from light pistols to meaty rocket launchers.

You'll be able to carry up to three at once and most have a secondary fire feature. Pull the R1 trigger and the throaty sound and joypad rumble feels like you've just unloaded a sawn-off shotgun in your living room.

There are machine-gun emplacements and anti-aircraft guns to command, but the standard-issue knife is perhaps the most sickeningly satisfying weapon. Thought Manhunt was rough? Wait until you see Killzone's blood-soaked melee kills.

All Killzone's guns look and feel real

Only the strongest ISA soldiers can handle meaty weapons like this chaingun



Helghast attack from everywhere. Keep yer ears peeled too – sound gives their positions away

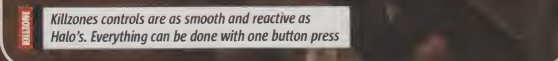
Killzone's battle set-pieces could be the most exciting videogame conflicts ever



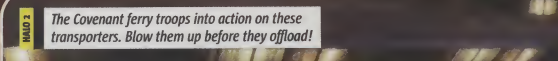
We've been hugely impressed with the lighting effects too. They help build a cold atmosphere



We absolutely love Killzone's visual style – there's something scarily familiar about everything...



Killzone's controls are as smooth and reactive as Halo's. Everything can be done with one button press



The Covenant ferry troops into action on these transporters. Blow them up before they offload!



ENEMIES

HALO 2

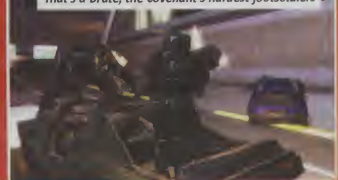
Prepare yourself for the Brute, a hulking cross between a gorilla and a rhinoceros. And look out for Prophets, the dome-headed spiritual leaders of the Covenant.

More exciting is the possibility of a new enemy like the Flood. We won't even guess Halo 2's plot twists, but we guarantee you'll end up pumping plasma into all kinds of fresh alien scum.

Prophets whip forces up into a furious frenzy. Take 'em out first



See that monkey-looking mofo riding your bonnet? That's a Brute, the Covenant's hardest footsoldiers



KILLZONE

Helghast. Say it out loud – it just sounds evil. These gas-masked militia monkeys are your sworn enemy in Killzone. They're invading your planet and you're the last line of defence.

Helghast infantry are cannon-fodder, but Elite Helghast Guards are highly trained and soak up serious punishment.

And the battle droids? No-one's so much as caught a glimpse of their bullet-proof armour, but they're going to be harder to drop than a clingy girlfriend.

Helghast Elite Guards carry the heaviest weaponry – yikes!



Helghast jet fighters show up to make your life even more hellish



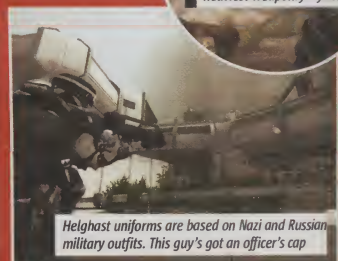
Your ISA mates have managed to plug this little bugga...



...Sending him spiralling into a lovely monument. Ah well, collateral damage



Helghast uniforms are based on Nazi and Russian military outfits. This guy's got an officer's cap



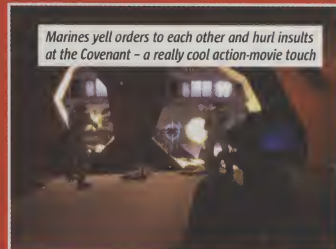
ENEMY AI

HALO 2

Another class aspect of Halo was Covenant cleverness. It's even better in Halo 2.

Enemy troops work in teams, advancing slyly and hunting you down. We've seen shield-bearing Elites front an offensive, defending the rearward Grunts. But it's not just the Covenant with extra smarts – your marine mates take up tactical positions like real soldiers. The AI takes the whole experience to a new level!

Marines yell orders to each other and hurl insults at the Covenant – a really cool action-movie touch



KILLZONE

So we've established the Helghast look scarier than Jordan without any make-up, but that's not the truly terrifying thing.

The AI is shockingly good. Helghast troops fan out, take cover, and advance methodically. In fact, it's so good that teams of AI soldiers are being used to test the level design. Your buddies are clever too, advancing with real tactical thought and acting without you!

Helghast move in packs, covering each other effectively and taking advantage of shelter



HALO 2 VS KILLZONE

TEAM CVG SIGN UP FOR THE BATTLE!

SO WHO'S GONNA THE SHOOTER WAR?

ALEX: KILLZONE



weapon, you just don't know what the hell it'll do.

Sure, Halo 2 looks slick but I'm still with Killzone. Not only 'cos it's the most promising PS2 shooter ever, or just for its cool, grainy visuals – I love that it's new. Like a secret

PETE: HALO 2



round Halo's massive levels creaming shiny Covenant butt in a Warthog.

Killzone'll match Halo blow-for-blow in tight corridor firefights, amazing scripted moments and cool weapons, but you gotta love the freedom you get from careering

LEE: HALO 2



just be PS2 ultra-type. Angel Of Darkness, anyone?

I know how Halo plays, I love the characters, baddies, vehicles and guns, and I'm absolutely positive I won't be disappointed. Killzone is an unknown quantity and it could all

GRAEME: KILLZONE



war are really flashing my muzzle.

Master Chief's probably going to track me down and collapse my skull for saying it, but Killzone's familiar warzones, real-world weaponry and terrifying depictions of the hell of

MIKE: HALO 2



scenes in videogaming history. I'm with Master Chief all the way.

Halo 2's going to stuff a plasma grenade up Killzone's poop shoot and force Sony to wave the white flag. Bungie has cooked up the most devastatingly exciting battle

PAUL: HALO 2



talented and whatever they're stuffing into Halo 2 you know it'll just blow our minds completely.

I simply couldn't believe what Bungie did with the original Halo – it still pulls off stuff that other games don't come close to. The guys responsible are scarily



HALO 2 Brutes take heaps of punishment. They're pretty slow and dumb though

HALO 2 Fancy that Ghost? Don't bother asking, just jump on the bonnet...

HALO 2 ...Then boot the driver out onto the tarmac! Master Chief does GTA!

"HELGHAST – IT JUST SOUNDS EVIL AND THEY LOOK SCARIER THAN JORDAN WITHOUT MAKE-UP"

Reminders of your once-proud society are all around you. Don't let them fall into Helghast hands!

ENVIRONMENTS

VS

These massive Covenant artillery guns are blasting the crap out of New Mombasa. Check out the rubble!

HALO 2

Bungie have promised to make the environments of Halo 2 "bigger, richer and more detailed".

The game opens on the war-torn city streets of New Mombasa, but a low-gravity visit to a moon base is confirmed and the Warthog concepts we've seen suggest snow and jungle levels. Awesome!



Civilian cars litter the streets and provide useful Covenant-clearing explosions when shot

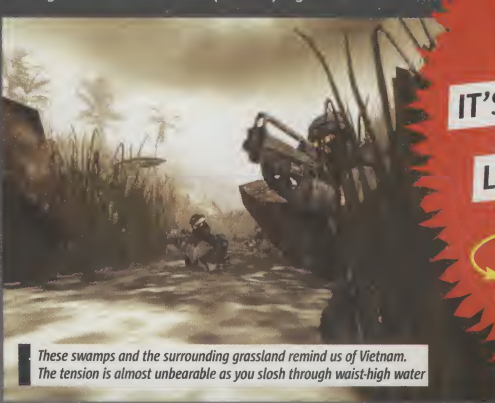
Killzone's urban levels take place in familiar-looking streets, malls and office blocks. Helghast are everywhere



KILLZONE

The weirdest thing about the environments in Killzone are how spookily realistic they look.

Since the conflict draws inspiration from 20th century wars, expect references to WW1 trenches, WW2 beach landings and Vietnam's close-quarters jungle violence.



These swamps and the surrounding grassland remind us of Vietnam. The tension is almost unbearable as you slosh through waist-high water

TEXT 2 VOTE

IT'S TIME TO DECLARE YOUR ALLEGIANCE - ARE YOU LOYAL TO HALO 2 OR KILLZONE?

CHOOSE FROM:

HALO 2 | KILLZONE

How to enter: first type 'POLL' leave a space, and then type out your choice. E.g: 'Halo 2'

TEXT YOUR VOTE TO: 83125

TEXTS COST 50P PLUS YOUR STANDARD OPERATOR CHARGE FOR FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS SEE PAGE 62

Preview

ACCESS ALL AREAS TO THE FATTEST FORTHCOMING GAMES!

DON'T BE A FAT JOE - CHANGE YOUR GAMING DIET

I was watching MTV Cribs the other day. It's brilliant, isn't it? Like The Sims for crazy rich Americans. Fat Joe was on and he had a cupboard full of white trainers, every pair exactly the same. What's the point in that? It made me think of this month's previews - so many huge games and none remotely similar. We've got Onimusha 3's kick-ass demon-slicing, Driv3r's car-chase coolness, Fight Night's heavyweight battering, and loads more. So don't be like Fat Joe - try something new!

Graeme Boyd
Graeme Boyd Team CVG

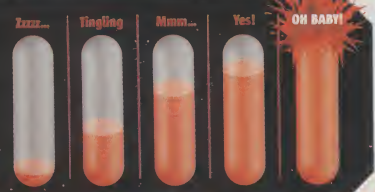
★ HOW CVG'S PREVIEWS WORK

CVG's reviews are the most accurate, informative and downright honest you'll ever read. Here's why...

★ CVG VERDICT BOX

★ WHAT THE EXCITE METER™ MEANS

You can tell how excited CVG's experts are about the game being previewed simply by looking at the Excite Meter! Easy, huh?



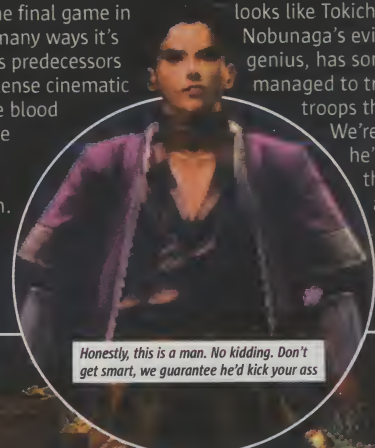
Headtrip? You better believe it. Capcom aren't mucking about with the final chapter in the zombie-slicing, demon-dicing Onimusha series. "You're going to love this..." we were told as we settled down to watch Onimusha 3's opening movie.

The next five minutes were a blur. A sweaty, heart-pounding, eyeball-searing blur. It's one of the most exhilarating action sequences we've ever seen in a cut-scene, an adrenalin-soaked mash-up of Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon's acrobatic fights and Lord Of The Rings' mental monster-filled battles, all set in 16th-century Japan. We hadn't even touched the pad and our palms were sweating like a fatter's flab-folds in Faliraki. Like we said, proper headtrip.

And suddenly we're outside the Café Bleu in modern-day Paris. A

dark shadow fills the sky, Independence Day-style, and when the camera tilts up we see a demonic beast raining zombie samurai onto the streets. Blood soaks the pavement as the helpless Parisians have their flesh sliced open. Head. Trip.

We don't usually get this excited about cut-scenes but our first look at Onimusha 3 told us what to expect from the final game in the series. In many ways it's the same as its predecessors - the same intense cinematic opening, same blood and gore, same hardcore hack 'n' slash samurai action. And in other ways it's completely different.



Honestly, this is a man. No kidding. Don't get smart, we guarantee he'd kick your ass

Twenty-three Onimusha years have passed since Samanosuke finished the first game

Modern-day Paris? Time travel? Sure, it's messed up, but we're enjoying the ride.

Okay, here's the potted plotline. Samanosuke Akechi, hero of the first game, returns to battle the demon lord Nobunaga, who has been resurrected once more by the forces of evil. Paris? Well, it

looks like Tokichiro, Nobunaga's evil scientific genius, has somehow managed to transport his troops through time.

We're not sure why he'd want to do that, but it does allow for the introduction of a great new character.



ⓐ We're big fans of Onimusha's enemy designs. You can't have too many Japanese ogres



ⓑ Slugs in the Paris sewers. Nasty business

CAPCOM
CAPCOM
SEPTEMBER

IN A NUTSHELL

Final iteration of Capcom's legendary slash 'em up series. Chucks modern-day Paris and time travel into the mix and features motion-captured real actors like Jean Reno and Takeshi Kaneshiro.

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

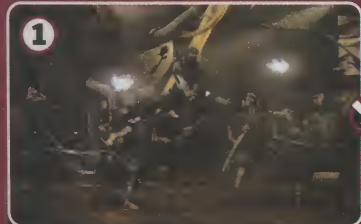
WWW.CAPCOM.COM

UPDATE

MOVIE MAGIC

The Onimusha series has always wowed us with its amazing intro movies but – holy crap – what's happening at the beginning of the third instalment is unbelievable!

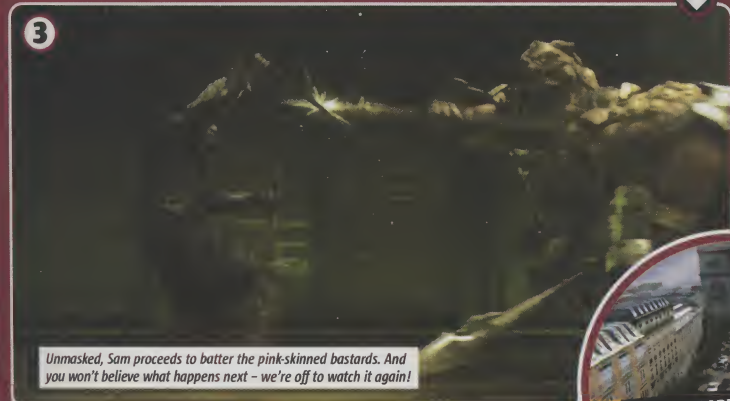
We don't want to come across as total graphics whores, but when you stick the disc in your PS2 and this little baby starts up you KNOW you're about to smear gaming goodness all over your panting, perspiring body. Legendary Hong Kong action choreographer Donnie Yen (he did the fight scenes in Blade II) offered his kick-ass expertise as action director. Do yourself a favour and track it down online.



1 The masked ninja infiltrates the demon troop carrier and battles hordes of zombies! Bosh!



2 But then he comes up against these two pig-faced munters and their crazy spade-spears



3 Unmasked, Sam proceeds to batter the pink-skinned bastards. And you won't believe what happens next – we're off to watch it again!



CORE DU NORD

Ah Paris, city of romance. Notre Dame, Sacré Coeur, L'Arc de Triomphe, zombie samurai chopping the locals to bits. What a beautiful place...

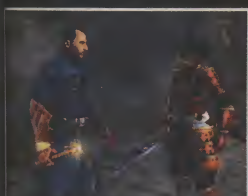
SHOOTING BLANCS

His name's Jacques Blanc, and he's a motorbike-riding badass who reacts fast to the demonic invasion. Early on, he saves a wounded military officer from an advancing horde of samurai demons. He grabs a sub-machine gun and kicks the merde out of the rampaging swordsmen. Voila, perforated hellspawn.

But don't think you'll be controlling Jacques in Paris and Samanosuke in Japan.

That would be too simple for Onimusha 3. See, a time portal opens up and sucks Samanosuke to modern-day France, and shoots Jacques back to Dark Ages Asia.

It's the most confusing premise in Onimusha's history, but don't worry. Even though the story's been given a kick up the arse the gameplay remains exactly as satisfying as you remember.

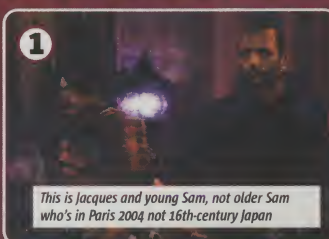


Both characters have been motion-captured

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Just because they're from different continents, cultures and eras doesn't mean Jacques and Sam can't be best buddies.

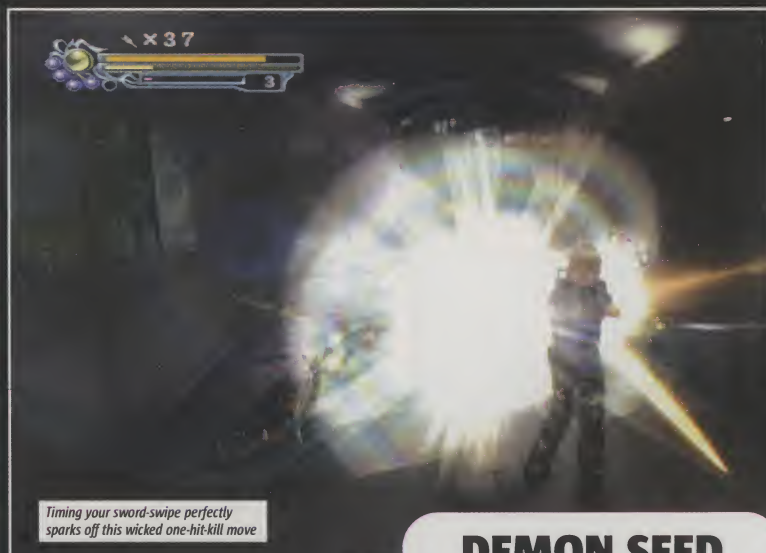
Early on you'll get the chance to fight side-by-side with Sam, joining up in a heart-warming trans-era tag-team.



1 This is Jacques and young Sam, not older Sam who's in Paris 2004 not 16th-century Japan



2 Together, they kick ass. Here, Sam's being controlled by the computer while you nick all the souls



Timing your sword-swing perfectly sparks off this wicked one-hit-kill move

DEMON SEED

Samanosuke and Jacques don't need much help to batter hellspawn into oblivion but, hey – if you can't beat 'em, why not join 'em?

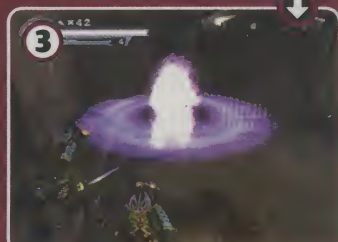
Collecting five white soul orbs allows you to harness your inner Onimusha powers and turn yourself into a glowing beast of beat-down. It doesn't last long, though, so it's best to save it for the baddest bosses.



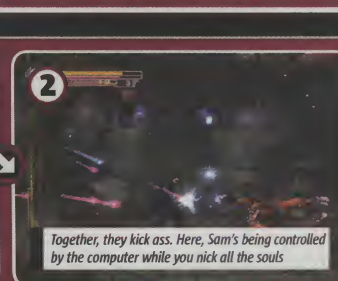
1 Pinned down and short on energy? Or just want to get demonic on evil's ass?



2 Bust out your Genma! Sam concentrates the power of the evil inside...



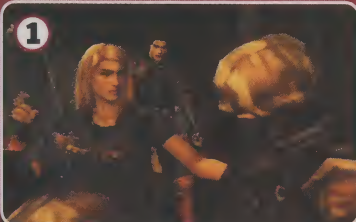
3 ...And transforms into an invincible demon! Perfect for dealing with hordes of zombies



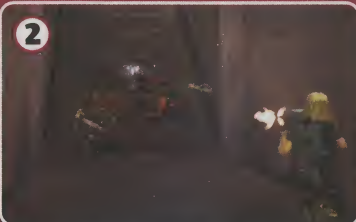
4 ...And transforms into an invincible demon! Perfect for dealing with hordes of zombies

FIT FRENCH BIRD

That got your attention, didn't it? Michelle is another new character in *Onimusha 3*, a French special forces agent who's pretty nifty with an assault rifle. She'll tag along with Samanosuke in Paris, helping out with some well-aimed volleys of hot lead and generally looking like a really pretty lady. Ooh la la, we'd like to give her a French kiss, and so on.



Not only does she look nice, she gets loads of useful information out of dying soldiers...



...And she'll help by unloading clips into demons as you go at them up close! Cheers doll!



Computer-controlled allies will help out in certain situations but you'll have to cover your own ass

Samanosuke and Jacques are both armed with the enchanted forearm glove that allows them to destroy demons. As before, killing enemies liberates their souls which you can then suck into your glove to restore health,

magic power, gain experience points and develop your own demonic powers.

HAVING A SLASH

Combat remains the same finely tuned hack 'n' slash action. The major overhaul is the addition of analogue control and the introduction of truly 3D environments. The action is still viewed from static Resi Evil-



Return of the pointy hats! Zombie samurai fashion hasn't changed much over the years

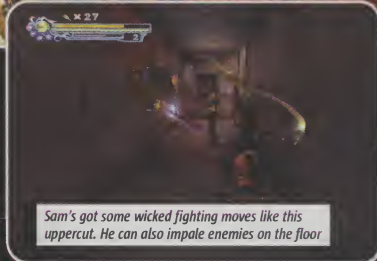
style cameras, but using the stick means you can move much more smoothly from one opponent to the next. Bashing Square produces wicked combos of sword-swipes that slice anything in your vicinity. It's not subtle, but there is opportunity for style kills: time your swipe to counter an enemy's attack and you'll bust out a flashy critical hit that'll dissolve the demon in a shower of light. Feels awesome and gets the job done REAL quick.

There's some nice variety between Sam and Jacques' preferred method of demon-despatching, too. Sam's a traditionalist, using his sword, twin katana blades, and a bow and arrow to take out enemies, while Jacques prefers the more Indy-esque whip and gun combo. He starts with a plain old length of rope, but pretty soon Jacques wields an amazing razor sharp chain whip that he can use to wallop enemies and swing across chasms.

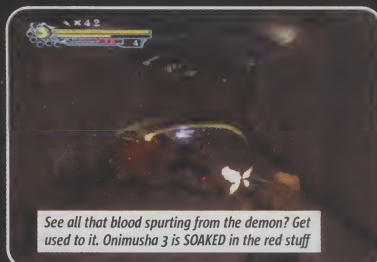
FEEL THE MAGIC

Magic also plays an important part in the action. Collecting souls builds your magic bar which then lets you unleash a fiery onslaught of hurt on your enemies, leaving them smouldering in a blaze of flame. Better still, collecting five white soul orbs allows you to turn into a demonic form for a limited time. Jacques and Sam glow purple and develop invulnerability for the duration of the transformation – perfect for dealing with the baddest of evil baddies.

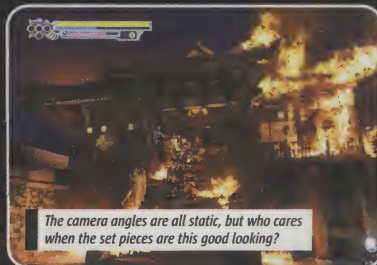
And you'll be thankful for the help – we came up against some truly nasty enemies within minutes of starting the game. Four-legged samurai and zombie swordsmen are just katana fodder: wait until you come up against huge ball-and-chain wielding ogres and massive servants of darkness swinging ten-foot swords crackling with energy! Our favourite early confrontation took place on the roof of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris – Sam and his sword against a gigantic wooden robot designed by Tokichiro and



Sam's got some wicked fighting moves like this uppercut. He can also impale enemies on the floor



See all that blood spurting from the demon? Get used to it. *Onimusha 3* is SOAKED in the red stuff



The camera angles are all static, but who cares when the set pieces are this good looking?

armed with twin cannons, missile launchers, and two spinning arms of lacerating death!

END OF AN ERA

As *Onimusha 3* draws the series to its heart-stopping, era-spanning conclusion, there's going to be plenty of other things to keep your mind AND joypad fingers busy. Is that a young version of Sam that Jacques is fighting alongside in 16th Century Japan? Will French military hottie Michelle be a worthy ally for the older Sam in Paris or an unnecessary burden? And will the two warriors join forces to kick Nobunaga's arse into the inner ring of hell for the final time?

All these questions about *Onimusha 3*'s storyline might be a headtrip, but the awesome cinematic presentation and refined hack 'n' slash gameplay mean we're positive that this is going to be the biggest and best slice of demon-dicing action in the series. Bring it on, Capcom – we're ready for the final showdown.

JACQUES ATTACK

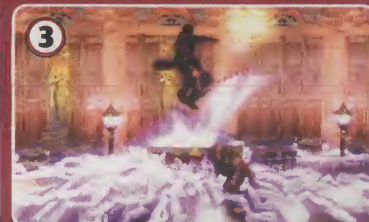
Just after Jacques meets Sam in ancient Japan, they come across a massive demon and a girly-looking little ponce. Sam runs after the wee one leaving Jacques with the big bugger. Now, we'd be a bit pissed-off if our new mate pulled this on us, but Jacques is a tolerant dude.



This demon is the first boss Jacques comes up against. Not the best of starts...



Especially when he's got a massive pink sword and a shield like a barn door



Luckily Jacques can avoid this crazy electrical move by whipping himself onto the ceiling

CVG OPINION

Not a huge evolution, but this screams, "Look at me! I'm shit hot!" and then flashes you its perfect hack 'n' slash boobs. A bit confusing, but tasty nonetheless. **Graeme**

WE LOVE

- That opening movie – watch it!
- Refined arcade hack 'n' slash action
- Delicious backgrounds and lighting

WE HATE

- Fixed cameras are so old-fashioned
- You still can't jump
- Emphasis on button-bashing





When you can't talk about abuse, talk to us.

Many young people who are being abused never talk about it. What do you say? Who to? And what exactly is abuse? There are several places you can turn. For free, confidential help and advice 24 hours a day call ChildLine on 0800 1111, or call the NSPCC's Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000. You can find further contacts, expert advice and support on a dedicated website. Just visit www.worriedneed2talk.org.uk

Talking helps it stop. FULL STOP.  **NSPCC**

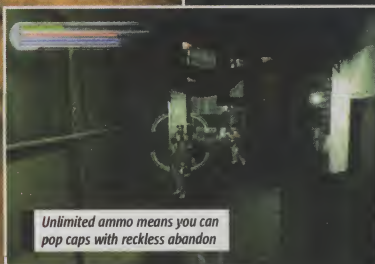
Thrash these twins with a pair of right-hooks to the jugular



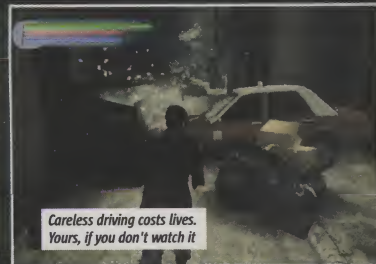
Chef got a little upset when Jet told him where to stick his dish of the day...



...and if you thought his chopper seemed dangerous, then check this one out



Unlimited ammo means you can pop caps with reckless abandon



Careless driving costs lives. Yours, if you don't watch it

RISE TO HONOUR

* PUBLISHER
SONY
* DEVELOPER
SONY
* OUT:
APRIL '06



IN A NUTSHELL

Fist-to-face and knuckle-to-kneecap combat runs rife in Sony's Hong Kong action movie-inspired brawler. Chomestier Jet Li's also along for the stunt-stuffed ride, providing voice-talent and fighting expertise.

AVAILABLE ON



WWW.UK.PLAYSTATION.COM

If movie titles like Enter the Dragon make you think of reptile porn, then you're getting excited for all the wrong reasons about Jet Li's involvement with Sony's chop 'em up.

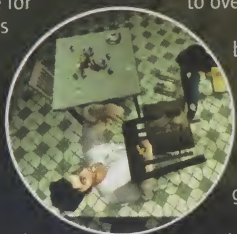
Despite sounding like advertising for Viagra, Rise To Honour aims to recreate the Hong Kong martial arts movie for PS2, from gravity-defying leaps across buildings and bullet-raining copter chases to impossibly outnumbered slo-mo leg kick sequences.

Martial arts star Jet Li's involvement means the motion-captured battle animations look shatteringly realistic, and the game drips with stunt-jammed Eastern authenticity – even the voice-acting is in English-subtitled Cantonese for the Hong Kong sections.

Controls are simple – use the analogue sticks for combat and movement while the rest is context sensitive. Jam the right shoulder button when near an interactive object and the game does the rest.

SLAP-HAPPY SHOWDOWN

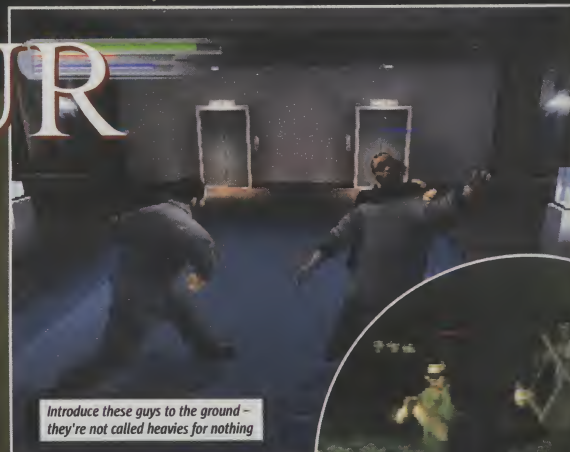
The dual-analogue fighting is equally straightforward – slam the right stick towards oncoming goons for punches and kicks, while shoulder buttons block and counter. It feels shallow to start, but watch the intricacies of your opponents' moves and you realise you need to react carefully to overcome the onslaught.



Scenery plays a big part in battle too – toss a limp body onto a hot plate in the kitchen, smash goons' faces into a glass mirror or brain them with a nearby chair. There's even some intense gun-blazing fun to be had too.

Sporting smooth, vibrant visuals and a dynamic soundtrack, Rise To Honour certainly feels like a Hong Kong action flick in all its adrenalin-pumped, over-the-top splendour.

If it can also throw in enough variety to offset the fairly limited and repetitive gameplay mechanics, this could well manage to be one to get your noodles in a twist over. *



Introduce these guys to the ground – they're not called heavies for nothing



A shortage of dance partners meant some punters had to make do

Looks like man-meat is back on the menu boys

FEISTY FURNISHINGS

Nearly every piece of scenery can be smashed, shattered or abused by Jet.

But even better, most of it can be used to inflict pain and brutality on your unlucky foes. Just imagine you've spent four hours queuing to buy a set of shelves in IKEA. Feel the anger? Now let rip. The Swedes will ban you for life – double bonus!



A cheeky chair to the chops will show them who's boss



Nobody tries to get out of buying their round when Jet Li's out on the town

There's simply no excuse for failing to wash behind your ears



CVG OPINION

Shallow and simplistic but crammed tighter than Jordan's bra with kung fu action and butt-clenching set pieces. We hope it can keep up the pace. **Matt W**

WE LOVE

- Frantic, fast-paced kung fu action
- Intuitive and flexible combat system
- You star in your very own action movie!

WE HATE

- Shallow gameplay mechanics
- Fighting can start to feel repetitive
- Context sensitive controls good and bad



MICROSOFT GAME STUDIO
DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE

APRIL

x4

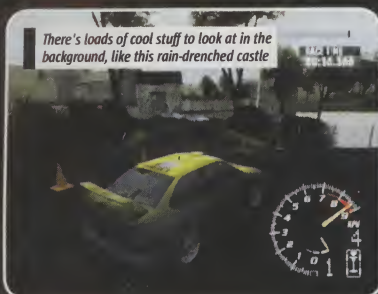
IN A NUTSHELL

Rally sequel with 600bhp excitement and XSN Sport support under the bonnet. 35 new and classic cars, 93 stages over four rally modes including ice racing and hill climbs, and four huge careers. Ticks a lot of boxes...

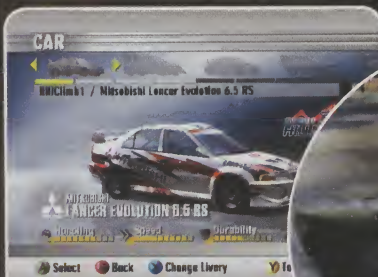
AVAILABLE ON

XBOX

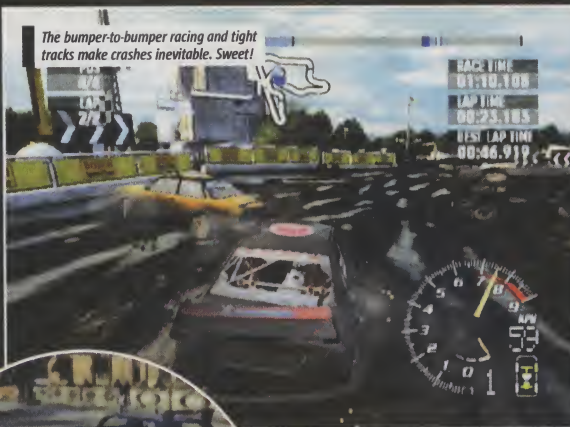
WWW.XBOX.COM/ENUS/
RALLISPORTCHALLENGE2



There's loads of cool stuff to look at in the background, like this rain-drenched castle



There's a dedicated array per rally type. This Evo's great for hill-climbing



The bumper-to-bumper racing and tight tracks make crashes inevitable. Sweet!



Ice races rule - you'll spin more than an S Club 8 album at a teeny-bopper party

Short stages and interesting surrounds pile on the fun in straight rallies

RALLISPORT 2 CHALLENGE

Don't worry, we think so too. Rally's boring. Yeah, Subaru Imprezas launching themselves at 120 mph off bumps and powersliding around corners is awesome, but going against the clock instead of bumper-to-bumper with other racers is about as exciting as a Sunday drive in your Gran's 20-year-old Fiat Panda.

It doesn't help when Colin McRae 04 and Richard Burns Rally take such a Volvo Estate-dull approach to the sport. What rally gaming needs is a selection of cars that goes beyond the usual Imprezas and Evos, exciting stages that don't go on forever, and the opportunity to go bumper-to-bumper with other cars.

BALLS-OUT RALLYING

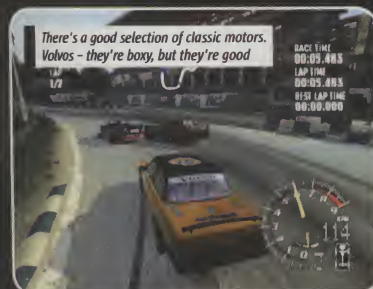
Rally's solitary nature is the main problem RalliSport 2 addresses. Not only does it let you race against three AI drivers, it's got XSN support on Xbox Live. Forget all that point-to-point, shaving a second off your time crap - RalliSport lets you spray mud in your opponent's headlights.

It's the first thing that indicates RalliSport's balls-out approach to rally. It writes off the dull under-bonnet tinkering, over-complex handling and solitary races, and emerge like a stripped-out, weight-reduced, roll-caged rally monster.

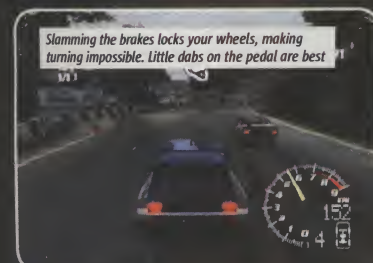
The handling's a great start. Rallisport is a temple to the powerslide. In fact, you might as well wind down the window and chuck the brake pedal into the gutter - this is full-on, foot-to-the-floor rallying, and a refreshing return to the top speed sliding of Sega Rally.

The different rally modes are another cool blast of air-con in a stuffy car interior. There's the usual straight-up stage rallies, but hill climbs, rally X races and ice races add a bunch of aqua-planing fun. The variety should break up the monotony of long, lonely drives, and since the career modes are going to be huge that's a bloody good thing.

It's looking beautiful, handles with a sense of humour, chucks in heaps of cool motors and rally modes, and lays down enough skidmarks to make a tramp's undies look whiter-than-white. Rally might be boring, but Rallisport 2 looks set to be anything but.



There's a good selection of classic motors. Volvos - they're boxy, but they're good



Slamming the brakes locks your wheels, making turning impossible. Little dabs on the pedal are best

In visual terms, Rallisport leaves its competitors choking on mud. Look at those puddles!



Negotiating closed tracks requires careful squeezing of the trigger buttons and a steady stick-finger

CRASH IN HAND

If you've ever seen the WRC on telly you'll know the best bit is when someone clips a ditch and sends their disintegrating motor spinning down a hillside.

RalliSport indulges this automotive bloodlust in style by cutting away to a Burnout style crash when you mess up. Like this...



A lovely shiny Evo flies through the air. One of those classic 'Oh sh...' moments



The impact sends the car somersaulting sideways across the dirt, windows shattering and doors flapping wildly



Even the fence doesn't help break the fall. Check out the bonnet wrapped around that post and the dust kicked up by the impact!



It's absolutely knocked out, yet the bloody thing's still going - God bless rollcages! But you'll have a hard time with the handling...

CVG OPINION

Its fun focus aims to be the antidote to po-faced, hardcore rally games. Online support could give the series the extra horsepower it needs. Graeme

- WE LOVE
 - Emphasis on excitement over realism
 - Massive variety of cool motors
 - Hill climbs and ice races rock
- WE HATE
 - Lacks depth of McRae or Richard Burns
 - Handling can feel a bit inconsistent
 - Other drivers sometimes dead dim



* PUBLISHER
* DEVELOPER
* OUT:
JUNE 1



IN A NUTSHELL

We've been waiting ages for this! The hottest car chases ever seen on console, over 70 vehicles to drive, 156 miles of real road in three cities with 35,400 hand-placed buildings. And guns too! Woo and indeed hoo!

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

ALSO ON

XBOX

WWW.DRIV3R.COM

FIRST PLAY!



If anything, we found cars flip a little too easily - but it makes for some phat crashes!

STEP AWAY FROM THE VEHICLE

The on-foot stuff in Driver 2 was pretty ropey, and GTA 3 made it look absolute pish.

Driv3r's been tightened up loads, but it's not the main focus (this ain't Run3r y'know). So it seems unlikely it'll be as much fun as fannying about with GTA's free-roaming world. The new first-person mode's cool, though.



1 Predictably, you can roll, strafe and duck to take cover behind cars and crates



2 Everything reacts to your gunshots - you can even decorate the tinned bacon



3 Abuse a hardcore arsenal from this wee MP5 to massive grenade-launchers



4 Pull out your pistol in public and the po-po will feel your collar

DRIV3R

Grand Theft Auto killed Driver. Serious. Less than a year after Tanner took his first stumbling steps outside of a car in Driver 2, GTA III swaggered along and slammed a bullet in his head - and buried the series.

It's the greatest videogame crime since Barbie's Horse Adventure. But the wheels of justice are turning. Tanner's back. True Crime thought it could be the kingpin. Bullshit. There's only one game that could destroy GTA's crim-game cartel: Driv3r.

Tanner's going undercover to take down an international car theft ring operating out of Miami, Nice and Istanbul. Of course, to gain the gang's trust Tanner's going to have to run a few jobs for them, which should mean plenty of Gone In 60 Seconds-style motor-thefting!

UNDERCOVER THUNDER

Now we've finally got our hands on Driv3r, what first hits us like the grille of a 90 mile-an-hour Mustang is how mint it looks. This

is as close to living representations of real-life cities as we've seen. Everything's accurately modelled and in the right place, with pedestrians and traffic milling around. Imagine how Vice City would look in Project Gotham 2 - that's right, awesome!

The motors look great, too. There are over 70 vehicles to drive, from cars and motorbikes to speedboats and even a fully-articulated truck! Every one handles like something from a Hollywood chase scene. That's the whole point of Driv3r - the development team want this to be the closest you'll ever get to being in a movie car chase. It looks like they've nailed it.

ACTION!

Burnouts, powerslides and donuts peel from your tyres as you scream around tight city streets with the police all over your arse like a bad case of piles. It's a lot like the driving in GTA, but the extra realism gives you an even more satisfying rush!

It feels ace, and Driv3r wants you to remember it too. In keeping with the

cinematic approach, you're also given all the tools you need to make chase-movie masterpieces in the replay suite. But you don't need to put in the editing hours - holding both shoulder buttons at any time cuts away to a sweet slo-mo camera angle of your carnage!

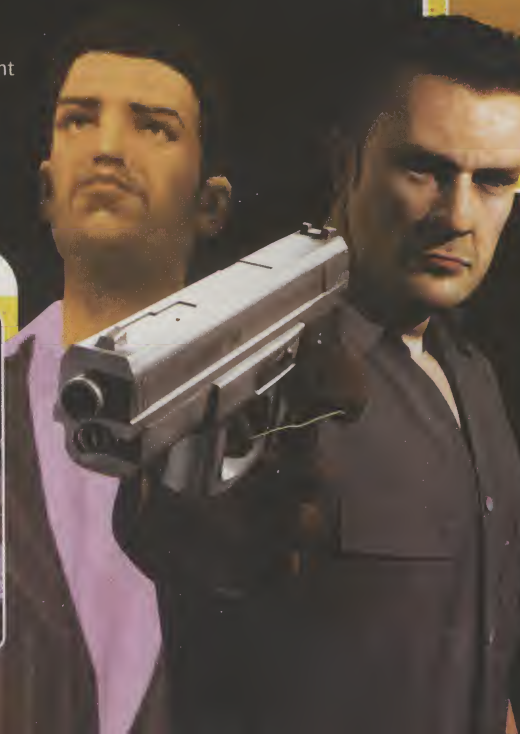
And since Driv3r is using a refined version of the Stuntman physics engine, every crash produces a scrapyard of spare parts! Even the tiniest shunt causes bits of your motor to fly off and full-on motor mash-ups produce the best crashes we've seen since Burnout 2.

TANNER VS. TOMMY

When we say GTA killed Driver, we really mean it. In GTA 3 there was a mission called 'Two-Faced Tanner' where you seemingly had to rub out the star of Driver. So is Tanner going to take sweet revenge?

Since Driv3r starts off in Miami, we reckon Tommy Vercetti might end up sleeping with the fishes in Biscayne Bay...

No word yet on any GTA-style extras like taxi driving. We're not holding our breath over this one either





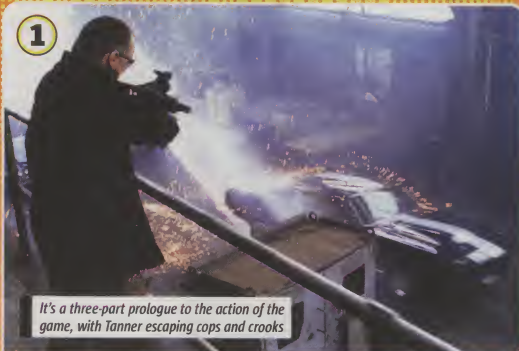
The explosions are properly cool – just wait until you see a truck go up! Bada-booom!

Oi, watch where you pointing that thing, you could take someone's eye with it

At the risk of sounding like a right fanny, the lighting effects really are beautiful

GOIN' HOLLYWOOD

The Driver games have always been about putting you behind the wheel in some of the coolest movie-style car chases, so it's only natural that Hollywood should get in on the act! Ridley Scott Associates have made a wicked short film called Run The Gauntlet to promote Driv3r – check it out at www.driv3r.com!



It's a three-part prologue to the action of the game, with Tanner escaping cops and crooks



Look out for the crash scene that produces this wreck – cool as funk



▲ Tanner's Mustang... being driven very badly. It's criminal



▲ Each city has its own flavor – Nice here's got lovely narrow streets



▲ The range of motors is well cool, from diddy little hatchbacks to sweet Lambo lookalikes such as this

✓ Avoiding crashes is crucial to completing your objectives. You'll need all the time you can get



TOTAL CARNAGE

The addition of the Stuntman physics engine means that every vehicle handles and dismantles just like the real thing.

Seeing a full-on crash in Driv3r is totally intense – you almost expect the debris to shower out from the screen! Much better than anything we've seen on the M25.



Crazy chases produce some of the best crashes – perfect for cutting into your own movie



Every part of the car is destructible. Batter the crap out of it and eventually it'll fall apart



Like the last two games, pretty much everything on the street is smashable...



...except for pedestrians, that is. They now just sort of crumple and boost your Wanted level

GUNNING THE ENGINE

These wicked physics don't just stop at the car crashes. The on-foot stuff still comes second to the driving, but there's a cracking range of firepower to throw around and every weapon causes cool effects on the surroundings. Shoot a trashcan with a machine-gun and it'll buckle and skitter down the street. Launch a grenade underneath a truck and the explosion will send the rig into the air in countless meaty pieces. Boom!

We haven't even had a chance to talk about how the top-notch storyline is shaping up, the amazing Hollywood voice cast, how cool the first-person viewpoint is and the way you can complete missions by going in with your guns blazing' or your wheels squealing'. We'll be bringing you more next issue, so in the meanwhile we've just time to add one more point: our first play has told us the most important part about Driv3r – it's gunning straight for GTA. *

CVG OPINION

It's taken a while but Driv3r's combo of car chases, hardcore gunplay and Hollywood-style cinematics could make this the ultimate crim-game mash-up.



WE LOVE



WE HATE

- Amazing graphics and filmic replays
- Smash the crap out of everything!
- On-foot sections are much tighter
- Could suffer against GTA's freedom
- We hope it's got a sense of humour
- Tanner looks like he's ate all the pies






Up to 21 opponents driving 35 officially licensed cars from 15 different motorsports racing in 31 championships over 52 real-life racetracks with 2.7mpg at a steady 142.3mph. Phew! Enough for you?



WWW.CODEMASTERS.CO.UK/
TOCARACEDRIVER

ULTIMATE RACING SIMULATOR

Opponents aren't daft - they'll shut the door on your line without the slightest hesitation..

...and if they're behind you they'll clamber all over your bumper to gain the advantage



⬆ A packed track means you gotta drive smart



With up to 21 rivals jostling for position, races can become high-speed traffic jams



Taking the inside line is a valuable tactic - you can't just bump your way to the front y'know

ToCA Race Driver 2 still has a story mode, but it's got a much better lead character. You! You're the star! See, if Pop Idol has taught us anything it's that lack of talent is no barrier to fame. Woo-hoo!

We haven't played far into the story yet, but so far it's looking good. Cutscenes are viewed in first-person, so you happily imagine yourself dropping the throttle and

But what impressed most during our early look at ToCA 2 was how mint the

driving feels. Handling hovers perfectly between simulation complexity and arcade fun. You'll need to brake early, go gentle on the throttle and all that other boring stuff, but you'll also be able to powerslide

till you puke and batter the crap out of the other 21 drivers on track. It always feels like you're in charge, so any muck-ups are your own fault, dirtbag.

ToCA 2 doesn't discriminate. We're talking seriously equal opportunities here – there's a truckload of refugee motorsports to try out featuring cool and unusual motors.

What's more, they all race differently enough to prevent the game feeling middle of the road. Neat!



Go for the usual array of international Touring Car championships, like Aussie V8 Supercars...



**...or you could connect with your inner redneck
and race turbo-charged pick-ups! Damn tootin'!**



These Land Rovers have so much suspension they bounce around Scotland's Loch Rannoch



We haven't been able to race the Supertrucks yet, but just look at them! Mean or what?

*Every smash marks on your bodywork.
Big crashes make your wheels fall off!*

Lap : 2/3
Race time : 04:13.03
Lap time : 01:55.24



Woof! The Jag XJ220's so powerful it spits flame when you slam on the brakes!

its



This dude's your boss, a canny Scot with a cracking Glaswegian accent

DON'T LOSE YOUR THROTTLE

Even more impressive is how the handling has been tweaked for the different motors on offer. Drive a traction-controlled Nissan Skyline and you'll really have to bugger up to spin, but just one squeeze of the throttle could send your skinny Formula Ford into a full-on pirouette. Add in Supertrucks, pick-ups and Land Rovers and you've got the most eclectic selection of wheels we've seen.

You'll want to look after them, too, since JoCA 2 flaunts a Terminal Damage feature that'd give any insurance man a loose arsehole. Every shunt and bump causes fibreglass to shatter and metal to buckle with some wicked eye-watering sound effects. Thrash your motor too much and it'll splutter to a grinding halt!

CVG
OPINION

The driving feels great, the storyline doesn't make you want to drink anti-freeze, racers on the track and online. Five-star potential. **Graeme**



WE LOVE

- The meatiest car models we've seen
- Finally, a racing storyline that works
- Loads of cars and types of cars



WE HATE

- *Replays aren't up to GT standards*
- *Backgrounds are a bit sparse*
- *No force feedback at the mo'*

FAHRENHEIT

The final countdown has already begun

PUBLISHED BY
VU GAMES
DEVELOPED BY
QUANTIC DREAM
RELEASED
NOVEMBER 2004



IN A NUTSHELL

Well, apparently it's not like anything else you've played before. It's a film, a dark one at that, except you control the story. Oh, you also play the parts of the murderer and the cop chasing him. Confused? You should be...

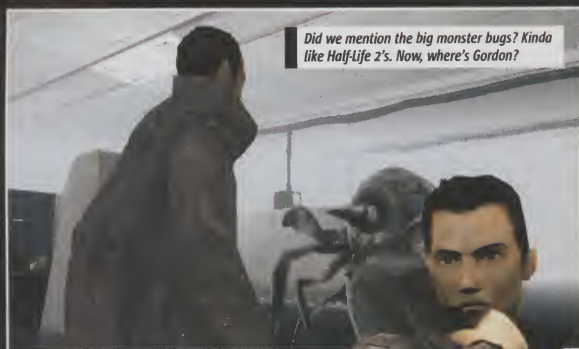
AVAILABLE ON

PC
CD
ROM

ALSO ON

XBOX, PS2

WWW.FAHRENHEITGAME.COM



Did we mention the big monster bugs? Kinda like Half-Life 2's. Now, where's Gordon?



Who wants to reform the Spice Girls? It's no good Mel C, you were crap as Sporty Spice too



It's French so expect a bit of nekkid flesh. Erm, we were thinking more of the female flava please

IN THE SHATHOUSE

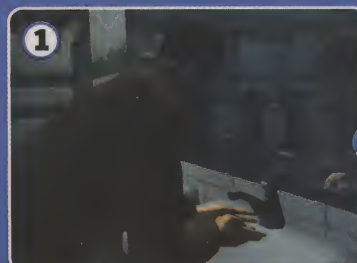
In a neat twist, you play both as one of the murderers and the cop cracking the case. It kicks off in a public bog where you shiv an old geezer, before resuming control and deciding what you want to do next.

Legging it might be your first instinct but is that really smart, considering you're covered in blood? Instead, what about using the sink to try to dispose of as much evidence as possible? You're really forced to think about how you would tackle such sick situations in real-life, making it strangely unsettling from the off.

BRANCHING OUT

Each scene in Fahrenheit has a number of different outcomes depending on what you do.

Some keep the story ticking over to its eventual ten-hour conclusion, others might bring it to an abrupt end. As you complete scenes they stay unlocked, like a chapter selection menu on a DVD.



You've just killed that old man - time to hide the evidence or it might be game over



Hit the right controls and you stretch visions or dream sequences to gain extra clues



Loads of mo-capping and an innovative way of animating the faces means it looks slick

Years ago, interactive movies were meant to be the future of gaming, till you rumbled that you did nothing except click a button when the screen flashed. Muck. Thankfully, they died a death, but is Fahrenheit the second coming?

Some say yes, the developers say no, insisting it isn't strictly an interactive movie. Instead, Fahrenheit is a 'psycho-thriller' - an interactive experience where your actions affect the way the plot unfolds. Meaning what exactly? Well, the way you move your characters around environments isn't especially different, it's more that what you choose to do in those locations has a major impact on the story.

The game could last two hours or ten, depending on what you do, and in this respect has a more movie-like focus on the storyline. We'd like to say it's like this or that game, but frankly it's pretty unique.

Set in New York, random people are committing random murders for seemingly random reasons. Each murder follows the same pattern - stabbed thrice in the heart and in each case the murderer carves cabalistic marks onto his forearms. Nice.

When you're done, the action skips to Carla Valenti, a policewoman on the case. Slipping into her panties, now you're hunting clues to help solve the case you've been trying to cover up. Sometimes the action even splits into 24-style split-screen to show the two strands simultaneously.

And that's the general gist. You control each character using two analogue sticks to mimic real-life actions (so to push a door you move close by and tap the stick in its direction) and play out sequences that contain up to ten different outcomes. Will it work? Who knows, but we're intrigued. *

Visual clues appear at the top of the screen to steer you right

Call yourself a proper cop? Where are the donuts then?



CVG
OPINION

Dark, edgy and different. Looks gorgeous but we're not yet fully convinced that this new style of interactive game/movie works. Go on, prove us wrong. Dave W

WE LOVE

20 hours of motion capture
Loved Seven? You'll like this plot
It's something completely different

WE HATE

Could be a touch too simplistic
Like point-and-clickers, it could end up as a game for non-gamers

OH BABY!

YES!

NO!

TEENY

222

ENGINE
METER

PUBLISHER
EA SPORTS
DEVELOPER
EA CANADA
OUT
14 MAY



IN A NUTSHELL

Solid licensed boxer from the kings of sport. Trade blows as one of the ring's undisputed legends, or create your own knucklehead and lead him towards glory. A contender for heavyweight champ? We reckon so!

AVAILABLE ON

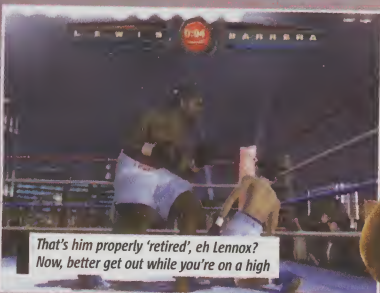
PS2

ALSO ON

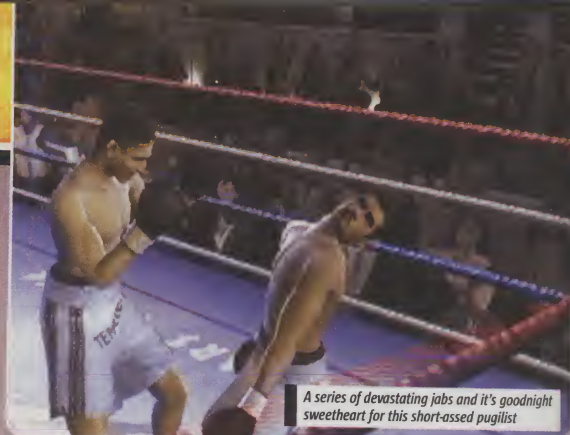
XBOX, GBA, GBA

WWW.EASPORTS.COM/GAMES/
FIGHTNIGHT2004/

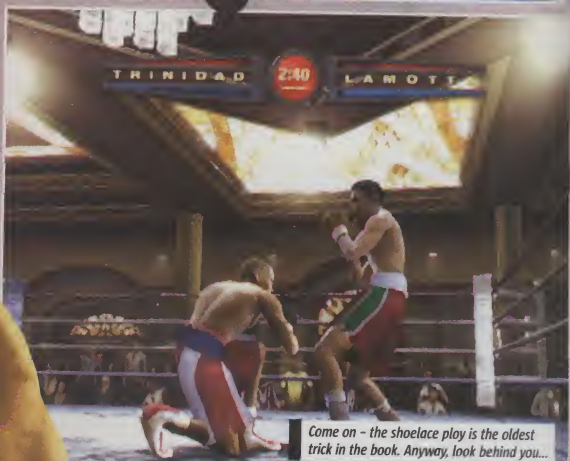
FIGHT NIGHT 2004



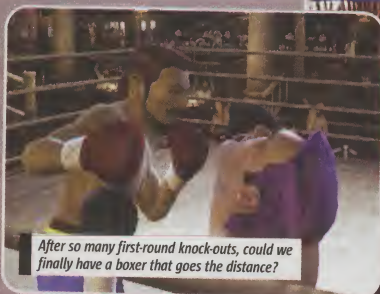
That's him properly 'retired', eh Lennox? Now, better get out while you're on a high



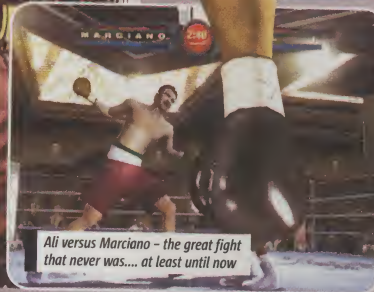
A series of devastating jabs and it's goodnight sweetheart for this short-arsed pugilist



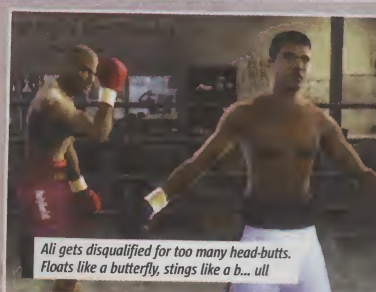
Come on - the shoeplay is the oldest trick in the book. Anyway, look behind you...



After so many first-round knock-outs, could we finally have a boxer that goes the distance?



Ali versus Marciano - the great fight that never was... at least until now



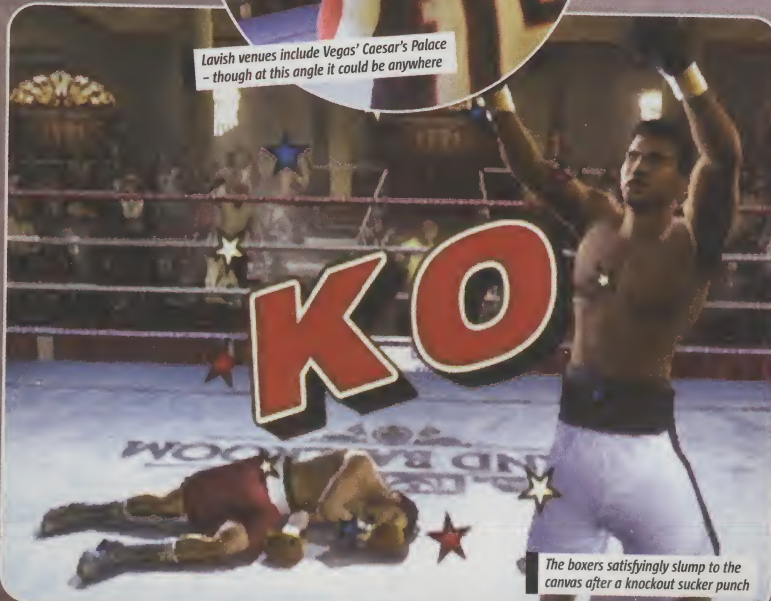
Ali gets disqualified for too many head-butts. Floats like a butterfly, stings like a b... ull

As the famous 'float like a butterfly, sting like a bee' saying goes, boxing has always been about poetry and grace. Oh, and cracking your opponent so hard his brain fall out his nose. And, apart from a couple of half-decent efforts already cruising the circuit, videogame boxing sucks harder than a top-heavy glamour girl after two weeks in the jungle.

Ding ding, though! It's time to wake up and sniff the smelling salts - Fight Night 2004 will change everything. From the luscious eyecandy of the big-boobed, bikini-clad scorecard hotties to skull-shattering knock-out moves like the haymaker, Fight Night 2004 looks set to be the coolest, sweatiest and, more importantly, the most fun boxing game to ever strut its stuff in the ring. You better believe it, sucka!



Lavish venues include Vegas' Caesar's Palace - though at this angle it could be anywhere



The boxers satisfyingly slump to the canvas after a knockout sucker punch

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Like all good licensed titles, this one's crammed full of the sport's biggest stars. Not just current ones either; we're sure we're not alone in wanting to drag Lewis back out of retirement long enough so he can get one last pasting. But legends like Rocky Marciano, Jake La Motta (the

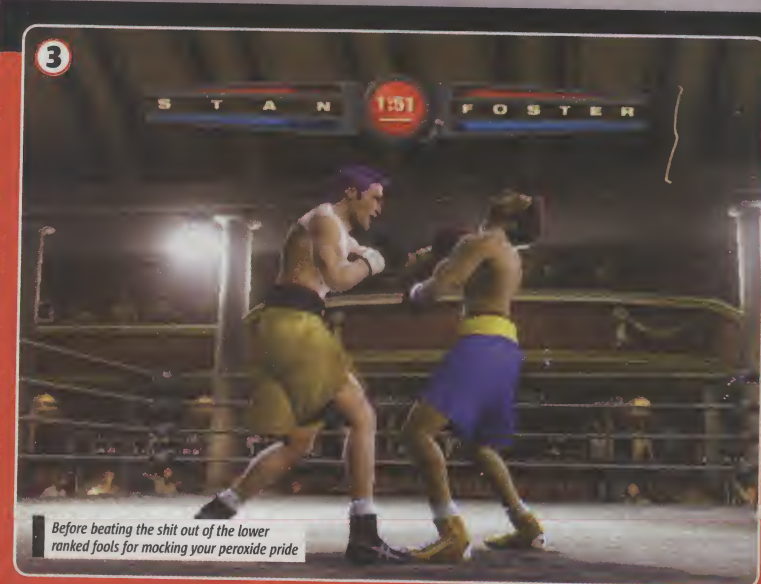
original Raging Bull) and Muhammad Ali are also all at ringside waiting to relive past glories. Topping it off is the chance to create your own freakish, mumbling pugilist (see box on the right) for a crack at the fantastically deep 'Career Mode'.

Okay, so maybe you're still wondering what all the fuss is about. Well, the real jewel in Fight Night's crown is the revolutionary control system. Rather than the messy button-bashing frolics of Rocky and KnockOut Kings, this one's all about rhythm and motion.

CONTROL FREAKERY

The right directional stick represents your fighter's fists, with careful, precision-movement dictating how you attack and defend. So, for example, push the stick downwards and then arc it up to the right, and your fighter unleashes a right-fisted uppercut. Push left and swing up and the response is a crisp left hook.

For added merriment, holding down L1 switches to body-punching mode, while R1 makes your boxer bob, weave, duck and swagger like a '70s disco dancer with a



Before beating the shit out of the lower ranked fools for mocking your peroxide pride

DAZED AND CONFUSED

Found yourself face down on the canvas, coughing up blood and wishing you'd stayed in bed? Relax! You've got a neat little double vision game to look forward to.

Simply match up the wobbly refs before the count hits 10 and the fight's back on...Result!



Centre the two images to fight another round



Oops, too late. Looks like it's game over



Blimey, Barrera must have the skinniest arms we've ever seen in a boxing game



"Taste my glove, wimp boy" Rocky goes mod... and so does the camera

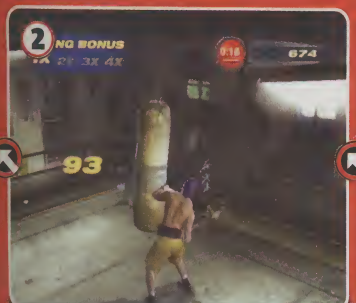


This screen teaches you how to use the right-stick

KING OF THE RING

The main meat of Fight Night is the Career Mode. You can create your own fictional bruiser, build up his stats in training mini-games and attempt to fight your way up from the bottom of the ever-changing ranking ladder.

And when all that lustrous prize money starts rolling right in, you'll be able to buy cool things like tattoos and ultra-sexy ring girls. Hubba hubba. Wonder if they come cheaper by the pair?



Then develop his skills in a series of mini-games. This one's inspired by that telly ad where that fit girl twats giant ciggies



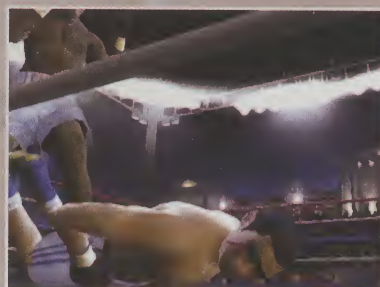
First of all, you'll want to create your own ugly freak. We were thinking along the lines of John Belushi from the Blues Brothers meets Mr T



"Who you looking at, punk?" Boxers aren't exactly Einstein, but do we really have to answer that?



Felix Trinidad shows off the latest dance craze called the 'Ooo, I've just weed my hex' routine



We're no experts, but that wallowing sea-lion routine ain't fooling nobody pal. 'Arf' 'arf'

horny ferret in his pants. Deep? This is arguably the most skill-dependent boxing system ever devised.

FEAT OF THE CHEAT

There are other tricks of the trade to master too. Each boxer comes equipped with a complete cranium-cracking 'special' punch for mega devastation; cheeky taunts replenish lost energy and boxers' entrances can be customised into laser lightshow spectacles more extravagant than an Olympic opening ceremony.

But even better, you can cheat! Don't appreciate the bloody pulp that used to be your hooter? Then make your gloating opponent pay with a vengeful head-butt that any self-respecting Chelsea footie fan would be proud of.

We reckon Fight Night 2004 is damn sexy – sexier than Cat Deeley doing the nude spread-eagle, even if the only nakedness you'll see in the game is your boxer's burly blood- and sweat-streaked man-torso. Boxing doesn't always make great games, but we think this one will.

CVG OPINION

Potentially the greatest boxing game ever, with ace visuals, bags of character and potentially the most ingenious control system yet. Boxing's coming home. **Stephen**

WE LOVE

- Controls make you feel the action
- Super large, cool boxer characters
- Bruising action and blood aplenty

WE HATE

- Collision detection suspect at the mo
- Controls difficult to get the hang of
- We love hip-hop but turn it down...

ON BASTI

YES!

NO!

TENSE!

72%

80/100



* PUBLISHER
HIVENDI UNIVERSAL

* DEVELOPER
INTERPLAY

* OUT: MARCH 12

PS2

XBOX

WWW.INTERPLAY.COM/FBOS

on't get us started about Fallout. Oh, go on then. Fallout is an RPG series that's been around for ages on PC. Set in a post-apocalyptic world where you had to shoot people with big guns, it was ace. We did warn you – we loved every last radioactive isotope of it.

So we were more excited than a perv in a porno shop when we got a look at Brotherhood Of Steel for console. It uses the Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance engine, so it's a bit more action-oriented than old-school Fallout. That's okay though, because the atmosphere and style is fully intact.

You'll be able to decide what skills your character develops, there's 50 (yes, 50!) cool weapons like flamethrowers and sledgehammers, and some properly gory death animations to lurch over with a sick grin. Best of all, there's a wicked streak of adult humour – you know, swearing and boobies.

And since Fallout's creators, Black Isle Studios, recently closed down, this might be your last chance to enjoy the grisly Fallout universe (nooooo!). Review due next month. Webbed fingers crossed.



The post-apocalyptic world is teeming with all kinds of mutants and freaks. Like a CVG party



Fallout's always had really gory death animations, and Brotherhood of Steel keeps this tradition alive



RPG-style skill development lets you to concentrate your abilities in one direction, like heavy weapons

WE LOVE

- Action-focused with RPG elements
- Loads of swearing and big boobs
- The Fallout universe is so slick

WE HATE

- Top-down view is a bit restrictive
- We loved old Fallout's freedom – this looks a bit linear

80/100

* PUBLISHER
SEGA
* DEVELOPER
SONIC TEAM
* OUT:
SUMMER



IN A NUTSHELL

Sonic Team blasts us back into Ragol orbit for their third Phantasy Star Online installment. Bizarrely, this time, turn-based card combat shapes the single-player game and four-player offline and online modes. You what?

AVAILABLE ON



WWW.SEGA.COM/GAMES/GAME
_TEMPHP?GAME=PSO3CARD

ファンタシースターオンライン

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

C.A.R.D. Revolution

III

episode



Nobody kills a big yellow chicken in our village and gets away with it



Clapping your eyes on Phantasy Star Online Episode III for the first time is like coming home from the pub one night to discover your girlfriend's been turned into an eight foot tall Albanian wrestler in drag – gone are the shapely curves and bouncing love-hooters you treasured so dearly, only to be replaced with something frighteningly unfamiliar.

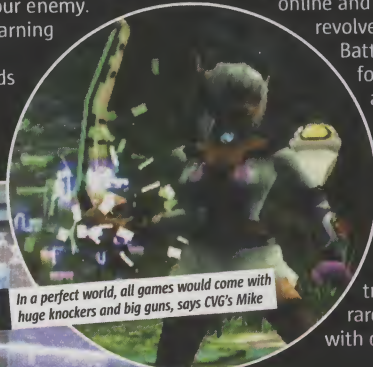
Swapping free-roaming exploration and real-time combat for turn-based arena battles, PSO III's makeover is a radical departure for the series. In the future, scientists have discovered a way to shrink weapons down onto tiny cards – known as, funnily enough, C.A.R.D.s – and it's these you'll whack out in battle, unleashing the destructive goodness within.

C.A.R.D. SHARK

The new C.A.R.D. system will have you cross-eyed with confusion at first. Each turn you'll select a weapon from your card deck, move across the combat grid, then launch an attack on your enemy. Success depends on learning the strengths and weaknesses of the cards in your deck to play them effectively against an opponent's

hand. It takes some getting used to but adds a heap of strategy and depth.

Victories are rewarded with more powerful cards and, in one-player Story mode, you unlock multiplayer arenas. Both online and off, multiplayer revolves around the Free Battle mode, where up to four players can hit an arena simultaneously in a two versus two showdown. Online play also offers the ability to build eight-player teams for Free Battle tournaments and there's also a trading area to swap rare and elusive cards with other players.



In a perfect world, all games would come with huge knockers and big guns, says CVG's Mike



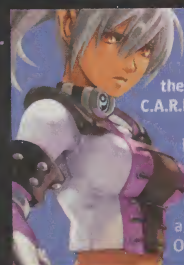
Here's your first job, CVG.

Missions are doled out by officials but you can pick up some dodgy work on the side too

SPIN-OFF CITY

From what we've seen, PSO III plays more like a spin-off than a proper sequel to the series, it's that different. The C.A.R.D. system adds real meat to the skeletal fighting engine of previous episodes and for that reason alone we're excited to see where Sega takes this once it hits the servers. Whether it'll still offer enough to stop the hack 'n' slash happy PSO traditionalists baying for blue hedgehog blood remains to be seen. *

DECK WRECKING



Both PSO newcomers and pros will likely be slack-jawed and brain-boggled the first time they see the new C.A.R.D. system in action. Once you've grasped the basics of battle though, you'll be shuffling more viciously than a posse of rampant Zimmer framed grannies in a high-noon showdown at the OK Bridge Club.



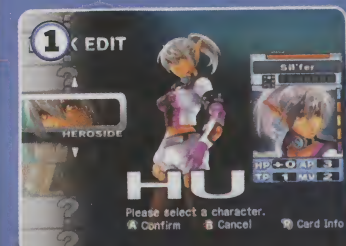
1 SET PHASE
Choose your weapon or shield depending on the Attack Points available

2 MOVE PHASE
Slide into position on the grid, making sure your target is within weapon range

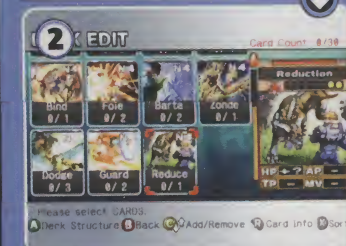
3 ACT PHASE
Finally, whip out the big guns and rain maximum devastation down on your foe

PERFECT POCKET ROCKET

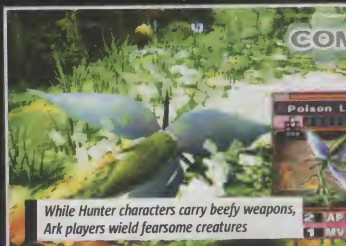
Whether you're sending a Hunter, Ranger or Force character off into battle, each has different strengths and weakness when it comes to combat – to maximize destructive potential, you'll need to ensure your card decks are suited to their skills...



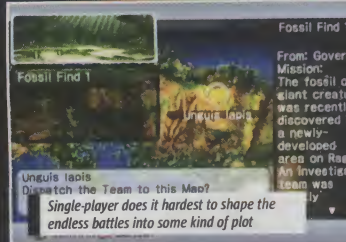
This pretty lady's a red-hot mamma when it comes to long-range attacks



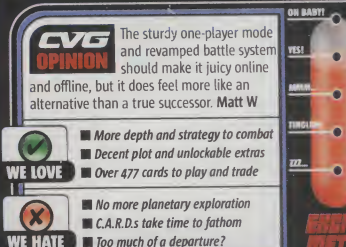
Rifle through your cards and line up the best you've got for your buxom friend



While Hunter characters carry beefy weapons, Ark players wield fearsome creatures



Single-player does it hardest to shape the endless battles into some kind of plot



CVG OPINION
The sturdy one-player mode and revamped battle system should make it juicy online and offline, but it does feel more like an alternative than a true successor. **Matt W**

WE LOVE

- More depth and strategy to combat
- Decent plot and unlockable extras
- Over 477 cards to play and trade

WE HATE

- No more planetary exploration
- C.A.R.D.s take time to fathom
- Too much of a departure?

* PUBLISHER
KOEI
* DEVELOPER
OMEGA FORCE
* OUT:
JUNE



IN A NUTSHELL

This time for Koei, legendary Japanese feudal warlords get the Dynasty Warriors treatment. The gameplay is virtually identical to DW, but there are several exciting innovations for fans to drool over.

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

WWW.KOEI.COM/
SAMURAIWARRIORS/



SAMURAI WARRIORS



The superb battle engine generates hundreds of on-screen enemies without a hint of slow-down

Dynasty Warriors is the hack 'n' slash equivalent of Final Fantasy – an epic series with legions of fanatical followers known to scrutinise every tiniest detail of each new release. Known to the rest of the gaming world as hardcore beard-fanciers.

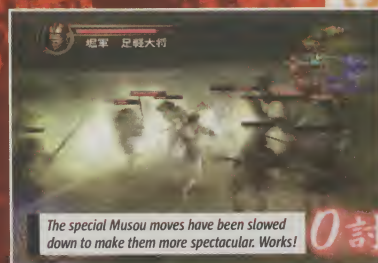
First, a quick history lesson: previous Warriors games have been based around the legendary exploits of Chinese feudal warlords of the Three Kingdoms. After much clamouring from the fans, Koei has now created a new tactical action series based on the Sengoku Jidai (Warring States) period of ancient Japanese history, a bloody civil war lasting from the mid 15th Century to the early 17th Century. This gives Koei plenty of scope for creating a string of DW-style sequels and spin-offs!

SAMURAI JACK

Frantic melee combat mixed with painstaking historical accuracy and authentic characters has long been the trademark of DW games, and Samurai Warriors continues in the same rich vein.

In story mode, you command one of five warriors from Japanese history, most notably Sanada Yukimura, the renowned leader of a samurai and ninja clan. The gameplay and scenarios will be familiar to DW fans, though naturally this time around the characters and costumes are based on Japanese history and folklore.

Fans can look forward to the same degree of attention to detail they've come to expect from the DW series, with costumes, cut-scenes and weapons all accurately reflecting the historical period. And as well as the more obvious



The special Musou moves have been slowed down to make them more spectacular. Works!



Ninja Hanzo Hattori's Musou move elegantly slices enemies into tasty filet steak morsels

geographical and cultural differences, we also spotted some cool but very subtle influences. So for instance, food pick-ups during battle now consist of rice and sushi rather than dumplings, and the raucous heavy metal background music has

been replaced by traditional Japanese sounds. In fact, aside from several new modes, like Castle Battle and New Officer (build up a character's stats during a series of mini-games), Samurai Warriors sticks mainly to the familiar DW formula. And given how well that series still sells, why not? *



What happens when you rub a ninja up the wrong way. Anyone know the right way...?

IT'S A TOOTHPICK, HONEST. NOW LET ME ON THE DAMN PLANE!

Horses now have their own special attacks – just don't expect to see any elephants



Mitsuhide Akechi's huge one was revered in ancient Japan. Sword, that is.

CVG OPINION

You know what to expect from the Dynasty Warriors team and this looks like rising to the challenge of what has gone before. Lacks originality, though.



WE LOVE



WE HATE

- Ace graphics, shreds and cut-scenes
- Accurate characters and scenarios
- Huge battles, branching plots
- Gameplay too repetitive for some
- Difficulty levels punishing as ever
- Really similar to Dynasty Warriors

ON BABY!

YES!

NO!

NEUTRAL

NO!

YES!

NO!

YES!

NO!

YES!

NO!

YES!

NO!

YES!

NO!

YES!

NO!

YES!

NO!

* PUBLISHER
MIDWAY
* DEVELOPER
SURREAL SOFTWARE
* OUT:
APRIL 5



IN A NUTSHELL

A dark horror adventure that uses grotesque monsters, terrifying sound effects and subliminal images to create one of the most genuinely disturbing experiences since Resident Evil first loosened bowels.

AVAILABLE ON



ALSO ON



WWW.THESUFFERING.MIDWAY.COM

The monsters were created by Stan Winston, who did the FX in Alien!

A murderer haunted by grisly nightmares. Death row convicts hacking each other to death with machetes. Guards being disembowelled by creatures lurking in the shadows. Death, decapitation, murder, monsters, gore, guns, guts... and a ten-foot-tall skinned demon with swords for fingernails. Girls, look away now or you'll never sleep easy again. The rest of you, prepare to fill your jeans.

Set in a maximum-security prison, The Suffering follows the fortunes of Torque, a surly convict sentenced to death for murdering his wife and children. The prison itself has a history of brutality and violence, and there are even rumours that death row convicts are being used in illegal experiments. While waiting for his turn to die, Torque manages to escape when the prison is overrun by hideous creatures that begin slicing guards and inmates alike into bite-size chunks. Torque may have managed to get out of his cell, but

escaping the prison will be like a journey through hell itself.

BLOOD AND GUTS

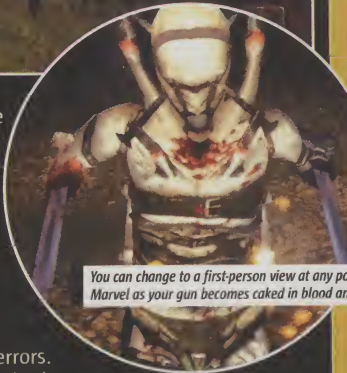
A thrilling blend of survival horror and kick-ass gunplay, The Suffering is an ambitious and truly horrifying game that's sure to frighten anyone who's grown tired of Resident Evil's ham-fisted terrors.

The shocks in the game are both physical AND psychological. As well the obvious knee-jerking, toe-curling reactions to the sickening violence and demonic creatures that roam the claustrophobic corridors, The Suffering also creates a tense and unnerving atmosphere by using ghostly voices that whisper to Torque as he explores the prison, and eerie shadows that hide all manner of undead monstrosities.

The game is also remarkable as the story changes direction depending on the choices you make, and anyone who decides to ignore cries for help can expect

a different ending to players who do their best to protect their buddies.

The Suffering looks set to be 2004's scariest game, but with brutal violence and foul language (frickin' A!), expect it to cause controversy when it hits the shelves in April. *



You can change to a first-person view at any point. Marvel as your gun becomes caked in blood and gore.

NOW THIS IS REALLY SCARY...

The Suffering opens with Torque being transported on a prison ship to death row, where he's thrown into a cage with a bunch of psychos.

When his fellow prisoners pull knives and try to kill him, our jailbird buddy suffers a series of terrifying hallucinations and undergoes an unexpected transformation...

1

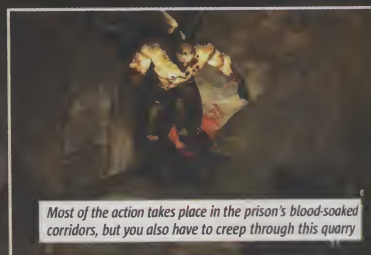
Locked in a cage with a load of nutters, there's nowhere to run when they try to cut you up

2

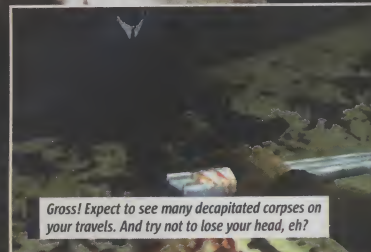
As Torque gets slashed, frightening images flash across the screen. What was THAT...?

3

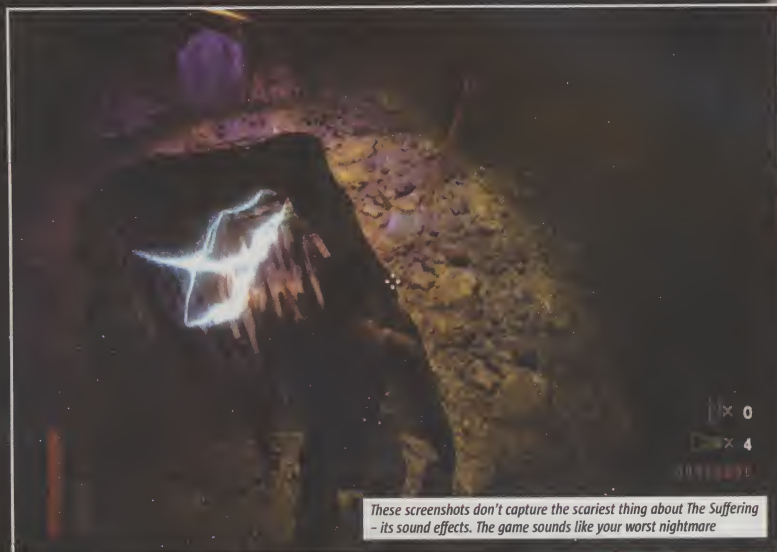
Without warning, Torque transforms into a hulking demon and starts chopping peoples' heads off! Check the crazy sword arm!



Most of the action takes place in the prison's blood-soaked corridors, but you also have to creep through this quarry



Gross! Expect to see many decapitated corpses on your travels. And try not to lose your head, eh?



These screenshots don't capture the scariest thing about The Suffering - its sound effects. The game sounds like your worst nightmare

CVG OPINION

Horror games have become a little stale, but this looks set to give gore hounds a great story to unwrap and some downright sick action to sate their bloodlust. **Dave M**

WE LOVE
■ Proper scary and bad language
■ Great controls
■ Gore a go-go

WE HATE
■ It made us jump
■ A lot
■ And feel unwell

OH BABY!

YES!

NO!

UHHH!

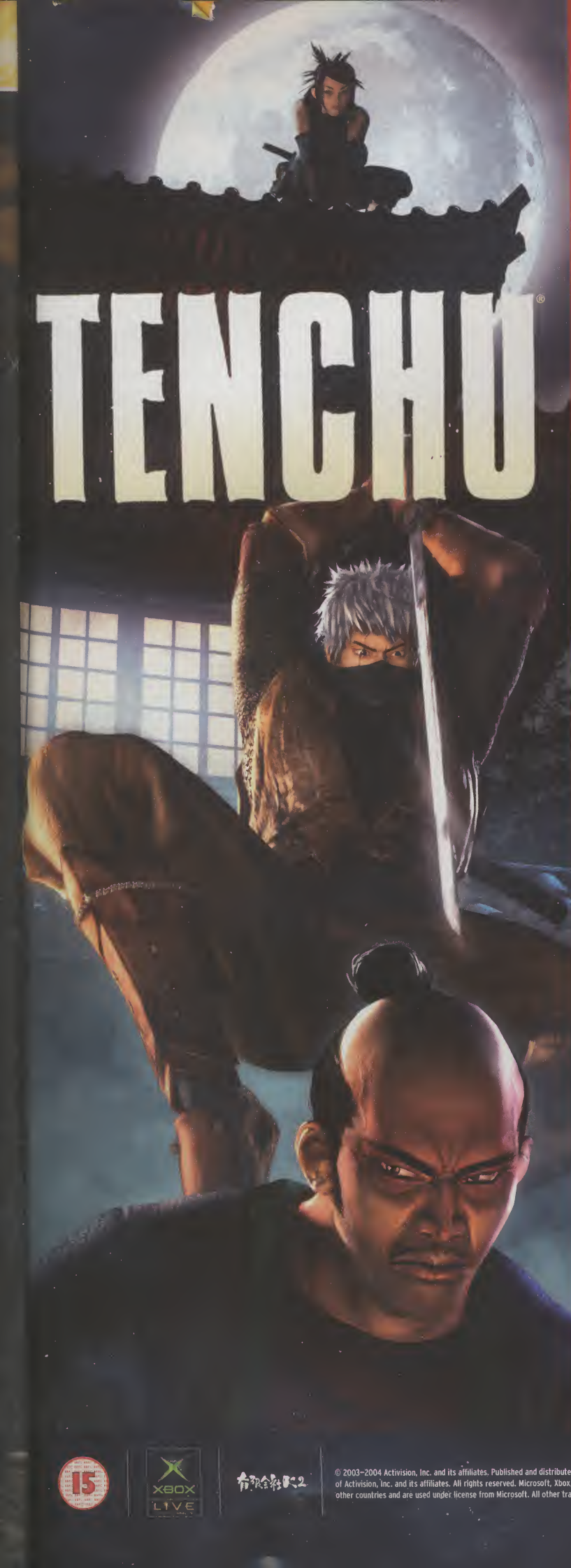
YEAH!

YEAH!

YEAH!

YEAH!

YEAH!



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Stealth Ninja Action on Xbox® featuring Xbox Live™. Coming March 2004.



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ACTIVISION

activision.com

You're looking real pale buddy... maybe you need some exercise

*** PUBLISHER**
UBISOFT
*** DEVELOPER**
TECMO
*** OUT**
TBC



IN A NUTSHELL

Fear meets photography as Tecmo's pant-soiling Survival Horror series returns for another close-up - this time with much fruitier snapping-action and an entire village tottering on the brink of Hell to explore. Sweet!

AVAILABLE ON



WWW.TECMOINC.COM/
GAMES/FF2.ASP



PROJECT ZERO II: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

Forget Resident Evil's cheap gore thrills and the psychological brain-twisting of Silent Hill - Tecmo's first Project Zero delivered scares in a casket of relentless, unpredictable blood-curdling terror.

Unfolding as a prequel to the first game, this second helping sees you taking control of Mio and Mayu, two twins trapped in a desolate mountaintop village. There's something horrible afoot as the events that caused the village's cataclysmic demise are played out repeatedly, and the eternally Damned inhabitants want blood spilled to end their torment.

GHOULS ON FILM

As with the original, your only means of defence is the mysterious Camera Obscura, holding the power to exorcise spirits by capturing them on film. Some significant tweaks have been made to the click-happy combat, adding an extra layer of depth to the gameplay. For a start, the camera now takes time to reload after each shot - meaning you'll need far more precise

snapping-skills to avoid having your soul sucked out the top of your head.

What's more, you'll pick up new lenses to augment your camera's powers earlier than in the first game. This, er, development makes ghost-busting a whole lot more strategic - some lenses slow spirits down whereas others freeze them in their tracks. Gone are the days when you could happily stand in one spot and click an entity into a timely grave - this time, they're faster, craftier and a whole lot nastier.

Project Zero II's twisted tale unravels in a compelling and hauntingly horrific manner, due in large part to truly awesome visuals that transport you right into the heart of this village of doom, along with the stellar production values.

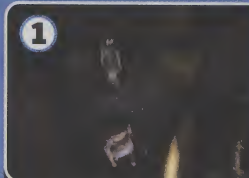
There are still a few occasions when the pre-set camera angles can obscure important items and the twins have a tendency to get in each other's way, but from what we've seen so far, it looks like this could be another innovative, mature and terrifying entry into Tecmo's fledgling horror series. *



Your camera's no good from a distance - but do you really, really want to get any closer?

DOUBLE DATE WITH DEATH

The stars of Project Zero 2 are psychic sisters, Mio and Mayu. Meow! Through a variety of playable visions, flashbacks and other spectral and psychic strangeness, you'll have plenty of time to mess around with the twins - individually or both at the same time. Wahey!



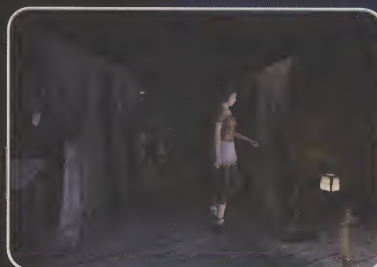
Both sisters are at your disposal at first to delve into grim secrets



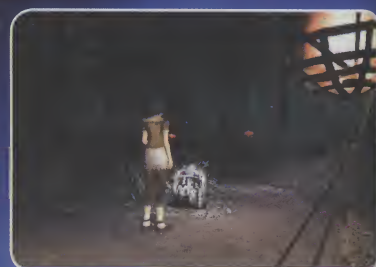
You'll start to relive events of the past as Mayu goes it alone



Following her can lead you into the path of some Very Bad Things. Now then, now then

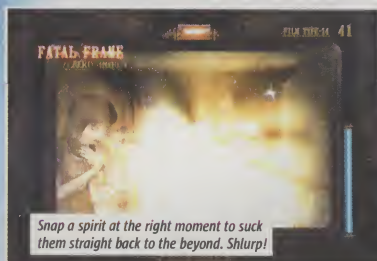


The undead are much craftier this time around so you'll really have to watch your back. And slides



These crimson butterflies seem harmless... but that doesn't mean they're on your side

As per before, expect Crimson Butterfly to prey on your sense of vulnerability



Snap a spirit at the right moment to suck them straight back to the beyond. Shlurp!

CVG OPINION Look out for disturbingly clever gameplay extras and sophisticated scares. Can't wait to feel PZII's bony fingers of fear on our gaming windpipes. **Matt W**

- WE LOVE**
 - Compelling and understated
 - More strategy to the snapping
 - The unnerving psychic radio
- WE HATE**
 - Camera angles need fine-tuning
 - Twins can obstruct each other's path
 - Too damned unsettling at times



DEVELOPER
CAPCOM
SPIKE
RELEASE
APRIL 30



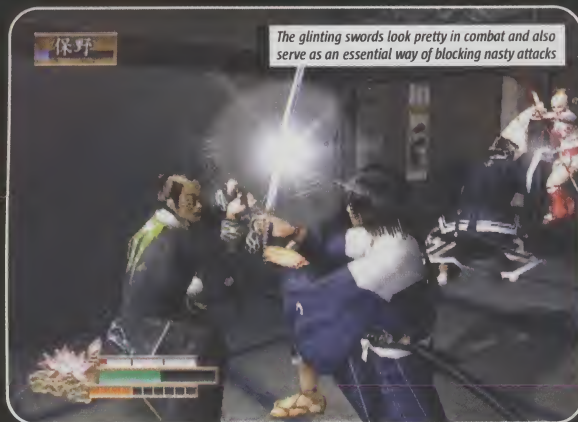
IN A NUTSHELL

Spend ten eventful days in the village of Amahama doing just what the hell you want in this freeform slash 'em up with major RPG overtones. It's got more freedom than the first game, more humour and more bloodshed.

AVAILABLE ON

PS2

WWW.SAMURAI2.JP



WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2



our life might already be like the heroic warriors in Way Of The Samurai 2. Maybe you spend your weekends remorselessly

terrorising your town as a one-man army, or teaming up with tough factions and waging turf war against rival gangs.

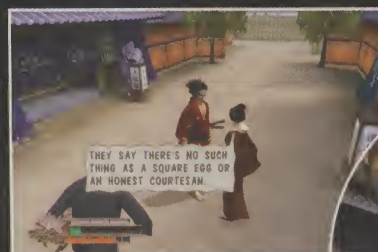
If your life IS like this then you're probably spending too much time on the run from the fuzz to enjoy playing videogames. So we reckon it's better to be a 'good' person and only wage war in Capcom's virtual game world instead. That's the right kind of reality.

COOL CONSEQUENCES

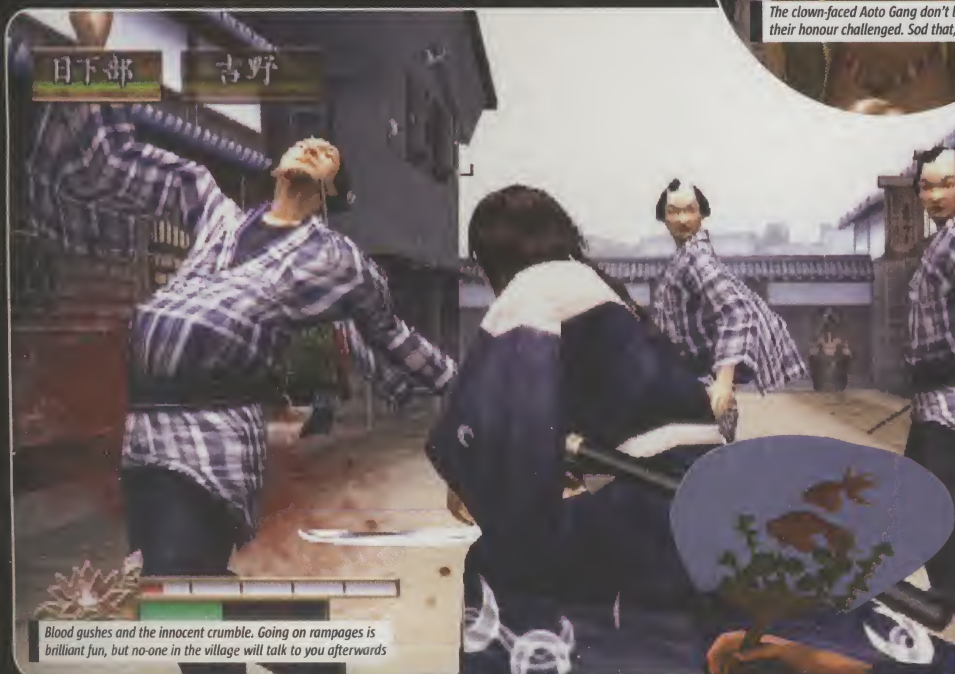
The idea behind Way Of The Samurai 2 is neat: spend ten days in the troubled village of Amahama, choosing to help the locals or slice 'n' dice them at will. Your actions aren't without consequence though, so if you choose to be a badass, you better prepare for some severe retribution in the form of angry blade-wielding villagers.



Ⓐ We're sure that ancient samurai didn't act as agony aunts to lovelorn village idiots, did they?

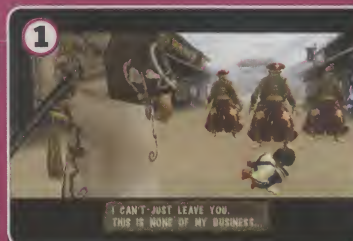


Ⓐ You can listen to the courtesan's inane ramblings... or cut her up with your sword



SUMU-RIGHT ON!

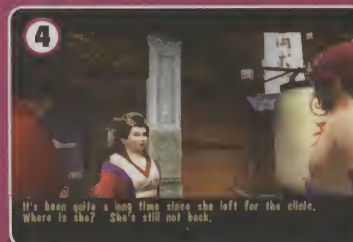
What helps make it special is that you get to decide the details of your very own samurai story. From the traditional Japanese battle dress to just how good a citizen you want to be, you really can do pretty much what you want in town. Abide by – or laugh in the face of – the samurai's Bushido code as you see fit.



Leave the mute girl to the Aoto Gang, but how will this action affect the rest of the game?



Help the monk train to withstand pain and he comes back later - MUCH tougher



Find the girl at the 'clinic' to put her family's minds at rest - don't ask what her ailment is



You can pull your sword on enemies or friends. Just be prepared for the consequences

Early missions involve you trying to find jobs to support yourself while in town. You can get work from three different agents, each representing one of the different rival factions causing all of the unrest and revolt in town. The Aoto Gang seems the meanest at first, with the dignified Migistrate's Office appearing to be the good guys. But

if that's the case, then why do the normally peaceful villagers exhibit such violence against the sly.

Magistrates? There's a Shelob-sized web of intrigue to slash your way through, for sure.

LOOK MA, I'M A SAMURAI

Play is split between exploring bustling streets, answering locals' questions as you see fit, and accepting missions and jobs that lead to scrapping with your chosen rivals. But that's not all. You can simply run riot through town if you want, or rob the locals, or shop to your heart's content, or gorge yourself in the restaurants and inns. Whichever, it's all damned good fun.

Sure, the setting is fairly confined but you still have enough freedom to live a virtual heroic life, and it's this mix that promises good things for Samurai 2 – especially for action fans that like a bit more meat to their games. *

The clown-faced Aoto Gang don't like having their honour challenged. Sod that, let's fight!

You can choose your hair and clothes and the more times you die and restart from scratch, the more outfits you get to choose from

CVG OPINION

The fights are fast and furious, the town feels like a real place and the gameplay structure is definitely liberating. Sword-obsessed action fans are sure to love it. Lee

- Freedom to play how you want
- The town and folk are well realised
- Fighting is dead hard but dead good
- Timed missions are a bit annoying
- Could it be too freeform?
- Outfits look like granny housecoats

OW BABY!

YES!

AMAMA

TOWNS

YES!

ENCITE MEYER

* PUBLISHER
VIVENDI INTERACTIVE
* DEVELOPER
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
* OUT:
Q3 2004



IN A NUTSHELL

Come over all action hero in Vivendi's game of the forthcoming Pitch Black movie sequel, The Chronicles Of Riddick. Guide Vin Diesel's bad boy to freedom in this first-person stealth shooter.

AVAILABLE ON



HTTP://WWW.STARBREEZE.COM/



Skewering your noggin helps replenish energy. Nano-technology scares us



Light sources will give the game away if you're hiding in the shadows

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

There are some places we'd happily spend eternity, like being stranded on a sun-drenched tropical island with a bunch of scantily clad Jessica Simpson-a-likes. On the flipside, we wouldn't be too keen to stick around the universe's most fearsome high security prison with a bunch of sex-starved mass murderers. Riddick doesn't seem to mind, though.

Playing as bald destroyer Riddick, you'll begin your descent into the bowels of Butcher Bay armed with nothing but your sinewy fists and a few gruff words – you see, escaping the vast prison complex demands as much strategic first-person stealth as it does raging, gun-toting combat.

Luckily, Riddick's got the upper hand thanks to his nifty 'eye shine' ability that lets him see in the dark. We had plenty of opportunity to try it out too – the massively interactive environments, ranging from claustrophobic interiors to pitch black mining caverns, let you do stuff like knock out the lights before sneaking up on guards to give them a big neck-snapping hug from behind.

HIDE AND SHEET

Mixing up the action, you can swipe some beefy blasters from the twitching corpses

of your conquests – one mission had us locating a DNA sampler in the compound before they would work though, as the meatier munitions are all DNA-encoded. Once you've got them in your grasp, you'll be tempted to stop sneaking about

altogether. Tactical Assault Rifles feature everything from explosive grenades to rockets, and the stunning graphics really show off the bloodletting in all its gory glory, with enemies flying through the air on a barrage of bullets before hitting the walls in a fountain of brain matter.

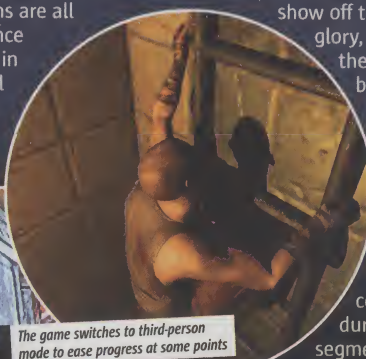
There's also some less spectacular but equally effective weaponry available from fellow inmates, who'll trade shards of glass, wires or even broom handles for a couple of sneaky cigarettes during the quieter adventure segments of the game.

Although the stealth, action and adventure elements are nothing revolutionary on their own, they really mix well, giving you a wealth of ways to tackle the puzzles ahead. Plus the atmospheric visuals are super slick, showing off the prison grime and gore in all its brutal beauty. We can't wait to get deeper into this subterranean sneak-and-shoot 'em up when it peeks out of the shadows later this year. *

Gun-blazing psycho-carnage looks delicious thanks to the yummy graphics engine



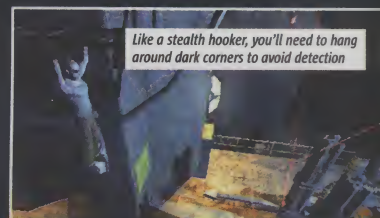
This guy's attention is elsewhere right now – make the most of it!



The game switches to third-person mode to ease progress at some points



Admire the detail on this guard too long and kiss your skull goodbye



Like a stealth hooker, you'll need to hang around dark corners to avoid detection

VIN VIOLENCE

Riddick's daring escape from Butcher Bay is not all about girlish mincing through the shadows.

You'll have no choice but to break some bones and tear up some torsos when prison security catches up with you.



We'd rather go out fighting than end up as someone's prison bitch



Once you've broken weapon DNA encoding, there's plenty of gun-splattering action

CVG OPINION

Riddick lines up a bunch of tried and tested genres and bashes them repeatedly until they're a single pulpy mess of concentrated gaming goodness. Matt W



WE LOVE

- Slick blend of gaming genres
- Gorgeously grim visuals
- Vin Diesel does the voice acting!



WE HATE

- Repetitive prison environments
- Not a lot of variety in both missions and objectives

ON RADD!

YES!

NO!

THREAT

TOO!

TOO!

TOO!

TOO!

TOO!

TOO!

TOO!

TOO!

* PUBLISHER
NINTENDO
* DEVELOPER
NINTENDO
* OUT:
APRIL 5



IN A NUTSHELL

Samus's original NES adventure gets a complete overhaul with new graphics, sounds and locations in Metroid's second GBA outing. But it's easy – pro Metroidhead's will blast through this in a couple of hours.

AVAILABLE ON

GAME BOY
ADVANCE

WWW.METROID.COM/
ZEROMISSION/

METROID ZERO MISSION



▲ Ledge leap to penetrate Zebes' deeper orifices



▲ Looks like someone needs to get themselves on the Atkins Diet. Might help with his breath too

If you've ever sicked up your lunch after too many shandies or stumbled headlong into your ex-girlfriend while trying to chat up her best mate, you'll know there are some things in life you just never want to see again – no matter how good they were the first time around. Thankfully, the Metroid series ain't one of them. Well, not quite.

The second Metroid game to hit the GBA takes us right back to where it all began. Zero Mission borrows the basic elements of Samus's first NES adventure – story, locations and gameplay ideas – and slings them into the mixer with a bunch of additions to create a 'new' game. Albeit one that's eerily familiar in places, especially if you played Fusion when it first came out back at the end of 2002.

Alongside the sonic and visual overhaul, the map's been reworked and is every bit as cunning as other instalments. As usual, you'll use Samus's trademark Morph Ball move to squeeze into awkward passageways and beef up your arsenal to overcome the obstacles hindering your journey across Zebes. Unfortunately, the

lack of any real gameplay innovations means the whole thing plays almost exactly like its ancient NES cousin.

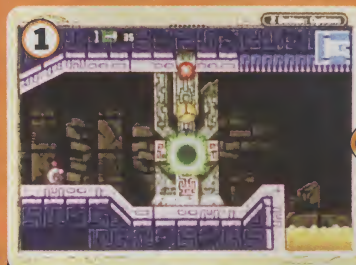
EASY ZEBES

With no new abilities to get your head round, the hand-holding navigation system that practically plays the game for you and some

SWINGING SAMUS

Zebes is stuffed with ancient devices that Samus must restart if she's going to reach Mother Brain.

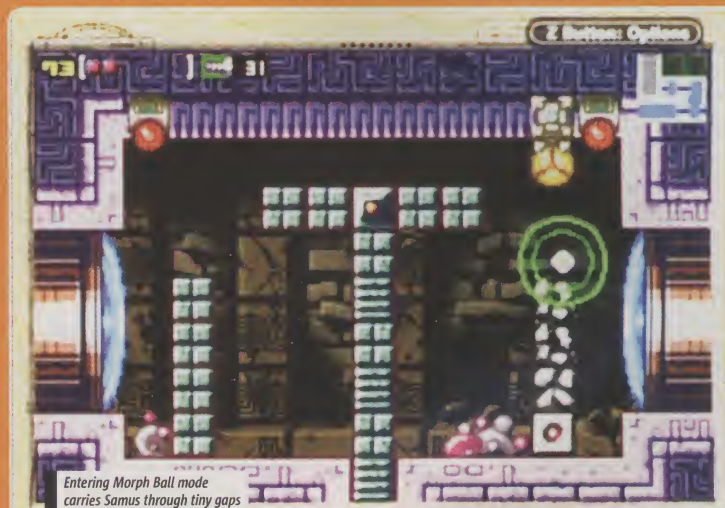
One of the most useful is the overhead trolley system that carries the buxom bounty hunter clear of perilous pits. If only they had those in Tesco...



1 Throw a few morph bombs in the works – that'll get the old gears grinding



2 Trolley it over the lava to blast the brains out of this serpentine boss



Entering Morph Ball mode carries Samus through tiny gaps



embarrassingly easy boss battles, it's looking likely that Metroid pros are going to be able to romp through

Swanky cut-scenes beef up the dramatic moments

Some moody effects crank up the atmosphere

this in a couple of hours – particularly if they've struggled through the earlier, rock-hard Metroid Fusion.

Nintendo's promising some extras once you've beaten the game, such as harder modes of play and even the original NES version of Metroid, but whether these will be enough to justify laying down your wad for a couple of hours' gaming bliss is questionable. Like your favourite granny who smells a bit mouldy, the game is rewarding but there's a definite sour whiff. ★



Blast critters with your ice beam then use them to make your getaway



As always, Samus's Morph ability lets her squeeze up tight passageways...



▲ Morph Ball cannons send you soaring up high

CVG OPINION

Zero Mission plays as beautifully as always – but the lack of any real new ideas and questionable life span means it's unlikely to make it as a must-have. Matt W

WE LOVE

- It's Metroid!
- Samus is still a babe!
- Slack and moody presentation

WE HATE

- No sexy new gameplay innovations
- The auto-navigation system gives far too much away

ON BATT!

YES!

MADE!

FINISH!

NO!

NO!

NO!

NO!

NO!

NO!

NO!

THE 'V' IN VOODOO CHILD!

...THE MOST ORIGINAL ACTION
ADVENTURER EVER!

- 81% PLAYSTATION 2 MAX,
MARCH 2004

MAX

Tak
and the POWER
of JUJU

TM

AN AWESOME ADVENTURE THAT'LL
HAVE YOU IN STITCHES!
GIVE YOUR CONSOLE JUJU POWER THIS MARCH



PlayStation®2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

THQ

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RISE OF THE MACHINES



Expert insight by Paul Davies
Artist's impressions by Joe Roberts

CVG LIFTS THE LID ON ALL THE NEXT-GEN PLATFORMS



With 2004 on the calendar, it's time we started speculating on all the next-gen consoles. The grand unveiling of

successors to PS2, Xbox, Cube and GBA SP is expected in May, at LA's E3 Convention. But why wait for a few facts and actual photos when we can give you educated guesses right now!

On CVG we think we can go one better than guesswork, of course. We have informed, expert opinion, which is damned sexy by comparison. What we're up against, of course, is several very large and very closed corporate doors. You have to stick your nose right underneath the crack in the hope of catching a whiff of what people are cooking back there...

This is by no means easy. These new consoles aren't just kept under wraps. These wraps are fastened to radioactive metal with titanium nails and sealed with lead. Get too close to the room and you could end up looking like Yoda.

While the various manufacturers are nowhere near ready to hand over details about their next generation, we have some jumbo-size clues to piece together. Along the lines of this...

COMPANY CULTURE

Nintendo, being the oldest surviving player in the business, happily ignores what the competition is doing – don't expect a PS3 or Xbox2 wannabe. Microsoft makes no bones about muscling in on Sony territory, but Bill Gates' quest for the home of the future sometimes hampers the vision of Xbox as the ultimate game box. As for market leader Sony, it has had the PlayStation family tree mapped out since before PlayStation hit store shelves. While this is good for stuff like backwards-compatibility, it's risky because ambitious competitors can be more experimental and therefore exciting to all of us.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Is Nintendo prepared to wait? We know it. Is Microsoft able to take on huge financial losses to make a success of

things? Bet your life. Is PlayStation the most important product from Sony, therefore worthy of various and imaginative support from every relevant division? For definite. Looking at recent history, we can imagine the thinking behind every next move that leads to a new, successful product.

KNOWN TECHNOLOGY

You had to be a complete dumbass to have missed the potential of PS2 as a DVD player, and not foreseen the impact this would have on DVD sales worldwide. Slightly less of a klutz to have believed Microsoft was premature with its Ethernet adaptor and hard-drive in every Xbox as standard, since Broadband is now so widespread. Nintendo working alongside Matsushita – well of course they would seek alternatives to neat things like Sony's Memory Stick that would end up as part of the new hardware.

The technology to power the next generation of consoles already exists – the questions is will be affordable and widespread enough at the planned release date of winter 2005?

PLAYSTATION 3
PS3 is a hard act to follow. Only Sony knows how this is going to be achieved. Our thinking is that PS3 will see Sony make network gaming not just cool, but ice cold! Question is, can Sony overtake Microsoft in this area?

XBOX 2
It doesn't have a name yet, but some dudes are calling it Xbox Next. Microsoft needs 'X-Nex' to maintain a couple of its most useful selling points to remain sexy: the most powerful machine with the best network gaming.

NINTENDO 'N5'
So called because it will be the fifth home console from... err, 'N'. Looks like Nintendo is playing the waiting game, although it has stated that it will beat PS3 and Xbox 2 to market around late 2005, early 2006.

NINTENDO DS
Every gamer's back-up console is a Game Boy of some description. The DS stands for 'Dual Screen'. DS will either be a revelation, or a stupid gimmick when it launches in time for Christmas this year.

SONY PSP
Stands for PlayStation Portable, the Walkman for the 21st Century. It's a portable PS2 that can wireless network with other PSPs. The new Universal Media Disc (UMD) format also stores entire movies of DVD quality.

PLAYSTATION 3

ETA: CHRISTMAS 2005/EARLY 2006

* SECRET PANEL

We think Sony will want PS3 to look as slick as possible. Slots for memory cards, USB connectors, Memory Stick, network adapters (including wireless) and controller ports (so you can use old dance mats, etc) all go here

* PS3 FAST FACTS

- BACKWARDS COMPATIBLE WITH PS2 AND PSONE
- WIRELESS CONTROLLERS
- 1,000 TIMES MORE POWERFUL THAN PS2!
- WILL RUN BLU-RAY, DVD AND CD DISCS
- COMPATIBLE WITH OTHER SONY HARDWARE

* WIRELESS CONTROLLER

CVG has heard through the grapevine that DualShock 3 is wireless, plus it has an extra trigger button below on the right-hand side



* INDICATOR LIGHTS

Sony has to go one better than the hypnotic blue light on PS2, so we're hoping it'll make a big deal of lights indicating On/Off/Standby and one for each wireless controller

"Sony will dazzle us with the unlimited power of a supercomputer"

* LCD SCREEN

Tells you what game is being played, plus how many controllers are connected, and the online status of your PS3

* TRAY

Sony has confirmed that PS3 is backwards-compatible, so the tray will need to support these discs in addition to the new Blu-Ray format

* VENTS

Keeping the powerful Cell processor cool will take some major circulation, hence a big old air vent right where you want it

SONY WON'T NEED DAZZLING CATCHPHRASES TO SELL NEXT GEN

The concept of PlayStation as a multimedia system existed before PS2 got its DVD playback.

However, for the sake of a clear message ('buy this for amazing games') and keeping the price affordable, non-gaming features were left out of the original PS. After the success of the first PlayStation, however, Sony could settle into expanding its definition of PlayStation, versus Work Station as represented by PCs and Macs – hence DVD playback. With PS2 Sony could also accept financial losses on

KILLER TECHS: INSIDE THE CELL

With PlayStation Sony coined the phrase Graphics Synthesizer to stun us into silence. It just meant we got good graphics.

With PS2, the introduction of an Emotion Engine had us all worried we'd end up screaming and crying uncontrollably while playing Tekken IV. We think it gave us cars with realistic suspension and blokes that could fall down stairs properly.

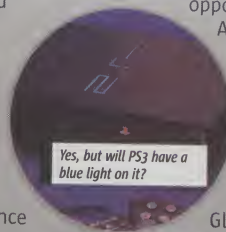
hardware in the early stages because it was guaranteed huge success over time.

Over the past three years Sony has talked of leading a 'Broadband Revolution', arguing that PS2 owners will help drive this market in the same way they did DVD sales, especially in Japan. We haven't really seen much of this until late last year with the launch of the Network Adaptor. Even in Japan, the broadband experience has been limited to Final Fantasy XI addicts. Elsewhere Sony officials increasingly refer to Digital Interactive

Entertainment as opposed to just games while on the subject of PlayStation. You may be happier playing Vice City, as

opposed to spending £1K on a Sony AIBO and hooking it up to PS2 via USB, but it's nice to know you can do this sort of thing.

So, while most of us will be happy with games that look and sound a lot better than on PS3, Sony will want to dazzle us all with another Glimpse of the Future, which will most likely involve the theoretically unlimited power of a supercomputer network that it calls 'Cell' ...*



Yes, but will PS3 have a blue light on it?

Now we're faced with Cell, a microprocessor being co-developed by Toshiba, IBM and Sony Computer Entertainment. It'll be the heart of PS3, and has the potential to be thousands of times more powerful than PS2 since combining lots of Cells over a network (ideally one using optical fibres, i.e. light speed) will massively increase the processing power. It's designed with multimedia

networks in mind, to effortlessly bat around high-quality video images and handle multiplayer gaming combined with all kinds of new interfaces.

Presumably, though, some clever sod will have to figure out how to make sure that when one person logs out of the best-looking Final Fantasy game ever, the rest of us don't end up with Space Invader graphics and AI like Jordan's brain.



HIP HIP BLU-RAY

On February 19 2002, a brand new disc format was announced in Japan: Blu-Ray Disc is the result of a joint effort between nine companies, among them Matsushita (who helped build GameCube for Nintendo) and Sony Corporation.

It is so called because it uses a blue violet laser. Blu-Ray will almost certainly be used in X-Nex, PS3 and N5 because it offers several important advantages: 27 gigabytes of storage on a single-sided, single layer CD/DVD disc, versus only 8.5 on a standard DVD; improved playback quality because of a thin (0.1mm) protection layer on the disc combined with smaller beam spot size, and overall increased recording density. Blu-ray discs also have a wicked fast data transfer rate of 36 Mbps, which should mean no loading times.

A final key point for games manufacturers is that each Blu-Ray disc can be imprinted with a unique ID to prevent copying. We also kinda like it because it needs a special carriage case to protect the discs from dust and greasy fingers!

XBOX IS ABOUT PERFORMANCE SO GATES MAY WAIT TO IMPRESS



we expect Microsoft would have preferred a larger share of the games market in relation to Sony by now: 70 million and counting

KILLER TECHS: SPEED DEMON

The Cell processor in Sony's PS3 will be based on the same tech as Xbox 2's main chip. Both are based on IBM 65Nm (Nanometer) technology, which will enable processing speeds of between 3 to 5Ghz.

Basically the 'nm' size refers to the width of the microscopic wires, and the smaller the better for power consumption and processing speed. Both systems will have the chips engineered to suit slightly different needs, but in the end they're very similar. However, not long ago, there were claims that Xbox 2 will combine the power of three (THREE!) 64-bit IBM processors, similar to those that already exist in Apple G5s.

PS2s in homes across the globe, versus around 14 million Xboxes.

Even so, going neck and neck with Nintendo is a great achievement after just three years (Nintendo has been in videogames for over 20!). Bill has bought himself a place in gaming history, and helped shape it too with a commitment to broadband as the only way to go online, and the hard disc as standard. Xbox has already arrived at one of the places Sony and PS3 needs to be next. So the question is, apart from more power, what comes next for Xbox?

We know who's providing the chipset, and we can expect MS to net more world-class

developers due to the success of Xbox in the US and Europe. So it's likely that Microsoft will settle back into what it became famous for, and that is pioneering amazing software that just about anyone can use, making a game out of communication and interactivity itself, so people don't need to hide behind strange game characters to enjoy playing with Xbox. Whereas Sony may continue to struggle to get players to experiment with more than games on PlayStation, we expect the next Xbox to be the first to make gaming within an online community almost too good and too easy to resist.*

Everyone is praying that the new box will be sexier

"It's likely Microsoft will settle back into pioneering software"

MICHEL CASSIUS
SENIOR DIRECTOR XBOX EUROPE

"Gaming is a social experience. You can immerse yourself in deep, rich worlds and challenge friends and rivals within that world."

"The Xbox brand, and specifically the tagline 'It's good to play together', reflects the unique social and competitive gaming

experiences that only Xbox can bring to consumers everywhere. The brand also reflects what we call the Digital Entertainment Lifestyle."

"Increasingly, gaming is part of a lifestyle where people, devices and content converge. No-one is more excited and already involved in the growth of digital entertainment than gamers. They are living it. And by connecting people with more games, more community and more varieties of entertainment, more of the time, Xbox enables the Digital Entertainment Lifestyle."

* ALIEN PLANET

The reason you have a green blob on top of your Xbox is to represent a mysterious alien world throbbing inside... We reckon Microsoft will make it glow this time

* THRILL BILL: VOLUME 1

You can bet Bill Gates wants X-Nex to connect to every conceivable network device. This rack of slots provides all the options he'll need, plus controller ports. No ciggie lighter though. Bah

* XBOX FAST FACTS

- POTENTIALLY THREE TIMES FASTER THAN PS3!
- 100% GEARED TOWARDS EASY NETWORK GAMING
- HUGE HARD DRIVE AS STANDARD
- WILL RUN BLU-RAY, DVD AND CD DISCS
- BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY EXPECTED
- WIRELESS CONTROLLERS

* TALL, DARK & MYSTERIOUS

We imagine the new Xbox to have the same imposing presence of a decent power amplifier, and to be completely black (apart from the vents) to suggest macho authority

* MUCHO COOLING ACTION

If the rumours are true - that X-Nex uses THREE processors - it'll need a lot of cooling. So we decided to give the box a platform of vents and fans

* THRILL BILL: VOLUME 2

The front panel will be completely featureless except for logos for all supported formats (Blu-ray, Bluetooth, DTS and so on), plus the Microsoft logo. When you power up, however, you'll see lights to indicate power, online status, number of controllers, etc...

* WIRELESS CONTROLLER

Wireless is the future, and Microsoft is all about the future. Don't expect to see MS trailing anything or anyone - especially not Sony and PS3



* TRAY

Will need to play existing Xbox games plus the new Blu-ray format discs that require a carriage case. So it'll look something like this

ETA: CHRISTMAS 2005/EARLY 2006

XBOX 2

"THERE WILL BE DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF PSP TO SUIT DIFFERENT NEEDS"

PSP FAST FACTS

- DIFFERENT VERSIONS AVAILABLE, INCLUDING ONE WITH A RADIO, ONE A MOBILE PHONE, ETC.
- BETTER THAN A PS2!
- PRESS-ON COVERS
- 500-METRE WIRELESS NETWORK
- COULD ACT AS A REMOTE CONTROL FOR OTHER SONY PRODUCTS

PLAYSTATION BUTTON CONFIG

All buttons, including the directional pad, are flush to the surface. It is yet to be confirmed whether they have analogue sensitivity, but we reckon it will.

A NEW FORMAT

The logo for UMD (Universal Media Disc) is shown here. The icing on the cake - as of this month, here at CVG we officially love new logos.

ONE DESIGN OF MANY

This particular style and colour of PSP will be one of many, as Sony is planning to release many versions to suit different needs. A purely gaming PSP may look more rugged. Rrrrr!

PLAYSTATION BUTTON CONFIG

The familiar PS arrangement of Square, Triangle, Circle and Cross buttons identify PSP as a stylish member of the PlayStation family.

CLIP-ON COVER

The cover is clip-on and easily interchangeable. So you'll be able to customise PSP just like you can a mobile phone.

WOT NO L/R BUTTONS?

With such a sleek design, we're not sure whether all versions of PSP will include all four L and R buttons.

SONY PSP

ETA: CHRISTMAS 2004

PROMISED TO BE A PORTABLE PS2 AND MORE BESIDES

Sony has had a portable games machine on the drawing board since before it announced PS2. In fact, Sony released a portable games-related device called PocketStation in 1998, although it really wasn't much more than a crude PDA.

Looked wicked though, and you could use it to change channels on your telly. Back then, we asked the obvious question, 'Why not compete with Game Boy, why this funny little thing?' The answer we got was simply an issue of style and necessity.

People were happy with Game Boy, and the main mission with PocketStation was

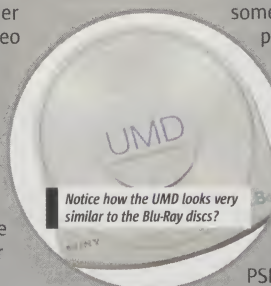
to promote PlayStation as cool. Again, you need to look at the world as Sony sees it: millions of ordinary people, secretly wanting their lifestyles to be enriched.

For Sony, sticking another Game Boy/Wonderswan/Neo Geo Pocket on the shelves would not have sat well alongside the perceived chic of PlayStation. Technology back then would have been kinda crude for Sony's purposes too. Better to give everyone a neat little gadget to wear around their necks.

Instead, Sony chose to wait until an experience worthy of the PlayStation

family could be delivered, this being in the words of Sony's chief of genius, Ken Kutaragi, a "21st-century Walkman". It is striking for the classic reason that something so small can also be so powerful, and (from what we've heard) affordable too.

There's no point over-exaggerating what PSP is capable of. It's basically a portable PS2 that can communicate over a wireless network at premium broadband speed. Consider all the reasons why PSP is so brilliant, and you're considering why Sony and PlayStation continues to be brilliant overall. *



Notice how the UMD looks very similar to the Blu-Ray discs?



REAL-LIFE PSP SPECS

We don't need to speculate on what the PSP can do, we've got the facts back in May 2003.

Since the list was released, however, there have been reports that the 8MB of RAM for the main memory will be increased to 32, after requests from developers. This will affect things like texture detail, and the upgrade would put PSP level with PS2 in performance. It will also make it easier to port over existing PS2 games.

Something else to consider: Ken Kutaragi of Sony has mentioned that there will be different versions of PSP to suit different needs. One will even incorporate a mobile phone!

THIS IS HARDCO...ARGH!

PSP CPU CORE

- MIPS R4000 32-bit core
- 128-bit bus
- 1-333MHz (1.2V)
- 8Mb eDRAM main memory (may increase to 32Mb)
- 2.66Gbps bus bandwidth
- FPU, VFPU (2.6 billion flops)
- 3D graphics extended instructions
- I Cache, D Cache

PSP MEDIA ENGINE

- MIPS R4000 32-bit core
- 128-bit bus
- 1-333MHz (1.2V)
- 2Mb eDRAM submemory
- I-Cache, D-Cache
- 90nm CMOS

PSP GRAPHICS CORE

- 1-166MHz (1.2V)
- 256-bit bus

- 2Mb eDRAM (VRAM)
- 5.3Gbps bus bandwidth
- 664 million pixels per second pixel fill rate
- 3D curved surface and 3D polygon engine
- Support for compressed textures, hardware clipping, morphing, bone, tessellation, bezier, b-spline (NURBS)
- Maximum of 33 million

- polygons per second
- 24-bit full colour (RGBA)

SOUND CORE

- VME (Virtual Mobile Engine)
- Reconfigurable DSP
- 166MHz (1.2 V)
- 128-bit bus
- 5 giga operations per second
- CODEC capabilities
- 3D sound, 7.1 channels

- Synthesizer, effecter, and other abilities
- ATRAC3 plus, AAC, MP3 for audio

MEDIA

- UMD (Universal Media Disc)
- 60mm-diameter disc
- 660nm laser diode
- 1.8Gb capacity (dual-layered disc)

- 11Mbps transfer rate
- AES crypto system
- Unique disc ID
- Shock proof
- Regional code system
- Parental lock system
- Repeat ordering system

OTHER SPECIFICATIONS

- 16:9-format widescreen TFT
- LCD (480x272 pixels),

- 24-bit full colour
- MPEG4 AVC decoder
- Wireless LAN (802.11)
- IrDA (Infrared Data Association)
- USB 2.0
- Memory Stick
- AV in/out
- Stereo headphone out
- Lithium ion battery
- Expansion port

NINTENDO DS

ETA: CHRISTMAS 2004

DS FAST FACTS

- TWO 3-INCH SCREENS
- CARTRIDGE-BASED
- BACKWARDS COMPATIBLE WITH GBA
- BOASTS CONNECTIVITY WITH BOTH OTHER DS HANDHELDS AND THE N5

SCREEN ONE

You'll probably be able to choose which screen features the main action, and which will display secondary information

SCREEN TWO

Secondary information will include the likes of area maps, inventory for your character, views from another location entirely, etc.

FUNCTION KEYS

Uploading and downloading content from another system (N5 maybe) will be a major feature of DS. Connectivity is still the future

FOUR BUTTONS

We sincerely hope that there will be four buttons on top this time, as GBA is struggling to support even SNES games with only two

NINTENDO D-PAD

We may wish that Nintendo will make this its first analogue handheld, but we expect to see the trademark cross-key again

"A UNIQUE ENTERTAINMENT EXPERIENCE FOR THE 21st CENTURY"

IF ANYONE CAN RE-INVENT THE POPULAR HANDHELD IT'S NINTY



games developer friend of CVG's once begged us to promise one thing: that we would always value Nintendo's innovations in

KILLER TECHS: KNOWN DETAILS SO FAR

Nintendo president, Satoru Iwata, is on record as saying "We have developed Nintendo DS based upon a completely different concept from existing game devices in order to provide players with a unique entertainment experience for the 21st century".

So far, the only clues to what this may mean to us is that there will be two separate 3" TFT LCD screens, separate processors, and semiconductor memory of up to 1 Gigabit. We must wait until E3 in May for the full low-down, and hopefully a preview of the first games.

gameplay control, and explain to our readers why this is important.

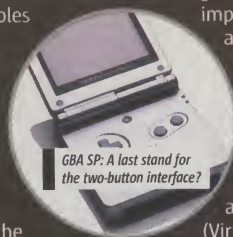
For this guy, the standardisation of the interface with our consoles (e.g. DualShock, and Xbox) would strangle creativity in game design. We talked about Kirby's Tilt 'n' Tumble, the Tetris game that monitored pulse-rate via a device you clipped onto the ear; the Pocket Camera, Hey You Pikachu (the first voice-recognition game in the world) and so on.

It was like listening to a last revelation from a dying man, revealing the whereabouts of the Holy Grail. Luckily, our mate wasn't in fact dying, but there could still be a Holy Grail. At this moment in time

nobody has a clue what the DS will look like, how the double screens will be arranged, and especially how games can improve just because they're played across two screens (we've played arcade games that use more)

What we can say with all certainty is that Nintendo has never let us down with its hardware innovations - new stuff has always been surprising and cool. Maybe not always safe (Virtual Boy was amazing, but accused of seriously damaging eyesight!), but guaranteed to have you completely rethink the way a game is played.

If the DS is in anyway disappointing, it will be very bad for Nintendo because we suspect that the DS will be closely linked to whatever the N5 becomes. *



GBA SP: A last stand for the two-button interface?

I WANNABE A PSP

You only have months until PSP and Nintendo's DS get here, but if you can't wait for a slice of next-gen handheld thrills, we know a couple of stopgaps - it'll cost you though.

THE GAMEPARK 'GP' 32

A 32-bit multimedia console that can download software from a PC, allowing you to play classic arcade and console games through system emulators such as MAME. If you get the backlit version, all the games and movie downloads look especially great at 320x240 pixels resolution.

Compared to GBA SP, this is quite special but also 'specialist', so will set you back around £120. GP32 is not officially available in the UK, so you'll need to import one. The place to go for one of these: www.lik-sang.com.

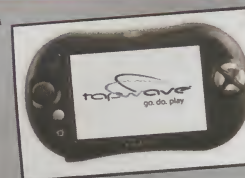


ZODIAC BY TAPWAVE

More of a PDA than a games machine, it's available in two versions: Zodiac1 for \$299 (£160 approx) with

32MB RAM, and Zodiac2 for \$399 (£212 approx) with 128MB RAM. Both more powerful than GP32, and the screen is higher resolution at 480x320.

You can download software onto the Zodiac as with GP32, but publishers including Activision and Sega are supporting with the likes of Tony Hawk's and Mega Drive classics such as Altered Beast and Golden Axe. For more info head to: www.tapwave.com.



GAMETRAC BY XILINX

The most recently announced PDA-cum-Gaming device. Gametrac boasts a 400Mhz processor, and connects to a wireless network via GPRS. It has GSM Tri-band capability too, so you can link up with players if you happen to be on your travels on any of five major continents. At the CES show in January, Gametrac was displayed on the Microsoft booth, but only because it uses a Windows CE operating system (before you get excited about this being a handheld Xbox or something like it!)



If you get tired of playing games, you can run around the garden making sound effects on it

NINTENDO 'N5'

ETA: CHRISTMAS 2005/EARLY 2006

TEXT 2VOTE

WHICH NEXT-GEN CONSOLE ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST?

CHOOSE FROM:

XBOX 2 PS3 PSP N5 DS

How to enter: first type 'POLL' leave a space, and then type out your choice. E.g: 'POLL PS3'

TEXT YOUR VOTE TO: **83125**

TEXTS COST 50P PLUS YOUR STANDARD OPERATOR CHARGE FOR FULL TERMS AND CONDITIONS SEE PAGE 62

N5 FAST FACTS

- USES SAME TECHNOLOGY AS PS3 AND XBOX 2
- GEARED FOR CONNECTIVITY BETWEEN OTHER N5S AND THE DS
- ONLINE OUT OF BOX
- DEDICATED NINTENDO SERVER TO ACCESS EXCLUSIVE ADDITIONAL CONTENT (NEW LEVELS, ETC)
- BACKWARDS COMPATIBILITY IS LIKELY

AIRVENT

Keep the super-computer nice and cool, else you'll have one cooked Gecko MkII. We think holes would look nice here to complement the slots on the outer casing

INDICATION LIGHTS

We expect N5 to be fully wireless, since Nintendo already introduced Wavebird for GC. Lights will show up here according to how many people are connected

Nintendo

SPRING LOADED OUTER CASE

Once you've inserted the game disc or cart, the outer casing closes to keep the N5 looking plush while in action. We'd like it to open kinda slowly for dramatic effect

BIG NINTENDO LOGO

We think Nintendo ought to make a big deal of its cool logo to remind people of who's really boss. When the case is closed, the logo comes together like so. Nice

EXPANSION SLOT(S)

Every Nintendo console has a bunch of mysterious expansion slots, the uses of which are revealed later. An Ethernet port should be here as standard, but fck knows what else

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE GAMES

Nintendo is in no rush. The Godfather of videogames is known to be sitting on the largest pot of cash, built from over 20 years of success in a market it damn near invented.

We're not going to sit here throwing quotes at you from David Sheff's 'Game Over' (still the definitive history of Nintendo), instead some wisdom of our own. We believe that Nintendo still considers itself as the master of the true videogames market. Impostors Sony and Microsoft are spending huge amounts of money on 'tricking' people away from what really matters - great games - and that greater games can never happen while the focus is on expensive, but irrelevant technologies that are inaccessible to everyday people.

It's a waste of time asking Nintendo why it hasn't done this or that thing while its competitors

race ahead with things like DVD playback and online gaming. The answer is always the same: 'It isn't important to games right now, and gamers don't need it for its own sake - if we ever find a compelling reason to get involved with such a thing, we will.'

When you're playing Wario Ware or Wind Waker this makes sense. But when the big guns start talking new technology and Ninty has nothing to show, you feel like the kid in the back of the car asking 'Are we there yet?'

Nintendo's next home console will either be utterly glorious, or a bitter disappointment. It'll show us the truth about games that we're somehow missing, or damn Ninty as a bunch of has-beens. *

NINTENDO PLANS GC UPGRADE KIT

According to the Nihon Keizai Shimbun (literally 'Japan Economic Newspaper'), Nintendo is planning some sort of upgrade for GameCube, to enhance sound and graphics capability. Nintendo is yet to comment officially on this, true or not.

GB CART SLOT

Insert your GBA/DS carts in here. Don't think Nintendo will bother releasing a separate device this time, so you'll plug in direct instead of going through a 'GBA Player'. Sweet!

MINI BLU-RAY FORMAT

Chances are Nintendo and Matsushita (aka Panasonic) will use Blu-ray as the format for N5 discs (see PS3/Xbox 2 pages for info). But for extra security, make it small again as with GameCube

KILLER TECHS: FAR, FAR AWAY...

Guess what - N5 will also be using a kick-ass IBM processor, alongside rivals PS3 and Xbox 2. This is slightly less of a surprise since Ninty already uses an IBM PowerPC chip (dubbed Gecko) for Cube.

News agency Reuters has quoted a Nintendo spokesman as saying that "Our machine will be ready at the same time as the other new consoles", meaning end of 2005, early 2006. All

three companies, it seems, are waiting on production of the new chip before it can guarantee numbers of units. Another theory is that the successor to GameCube will be a repackaged Xbox 2. We think Nintendo would rather burn than do such a thing. Besides, this is an old rumour that used to be tagged onto Sega and the first Xbox, so don't take it seriously.

Anyway, with Nintendo the "cat's meow" as it has been known is always the controller. Love them or hate them, Nintendo's bizarre-o pads have been the talking point ever since the old NES cross-key. It's all about the games with Nintendo, and the interface is a crucial part of the experience. It may be strange compared to DualShock3, but we can't wait to see.

NOW WE WAIT AND SEE

Less than three months from now you will know exactly what the three big players have planned for our gaming future. CVG will be attending E3 in LA this coming May, front of the queue, waiting to receive The Truth.

Until the time that we can bring you the first reports, why not write and let us know what you think of our vision for the consoles? Do you think you could take a better shot? Contact us via snail mail at CVG, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ, or email us at mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk right now!







COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

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Shellshock: Nam '67

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

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Killzone



PAINKILLER™

HEAVEN'S GOT A HITMAN



The next best thing to a well-oiled stake-gun is an NVIDIA GeForce FX graphics processor. Painkiller's got old-school gameplay with the next-generation graphics you're itching for, so you need the right hardware.

NVIDIA. The Way It's Meant To Be Played.



Incredibly Detailed Monsters



Single and Multi-Player



Advanced Physics (Havok™ 2.0)

"There is no doubt Painkiller is already on its way to becoming the biggest hit of 2004" Gamechronicles.com

"This is a serious contender for 2004's top FPS honors" Play Magazine

WWW.PAINKILLERGAME.COM

PC CD-ROM



16+
www.pegi.info

PLAYS BEST ON
ALIENWARE

POWERED BY
gameSpy



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TEXT YOUR ANSWERS TO: **83125**
(SAME FOR T-MOBILE USERS)

How to enter: first type 'CVG HACK'
and then the letter matching your answer. Eg:
'CVG HACK B'

TEXTS COST 50P PLUS STANDARD OPERATING CHARGE

HACK PR

Hack your way into the CVG mainframe
and nick a portable DVD player,
a PS2, copies of .hack Special Edition
AND priceless T-shirts and art boards signed
by the creators of the .hack phenomenon!



IDENTIFY THE CORRUPT SCREENSHOT FOR A CHANCE TO WIN!

There are some amazing prizes up for
grabs, so you're going to have to work
to win this one!

Problem is, we wanted to use the
first screenshot below to show off how
cool .hack looks but some nobhead's
hacked into our system and corrupted
it! The unsullied original is hidden
among the three marked A, B and C –
question is, which one is it? All you
have to do is compare them for clues!

HACKED

Tell you what, we is
well brainy here at
CVG, but .hack has us
properly confused.
Confused in a good
way, though. Y'see, the world of
.hack is one of the cleverest, most
intense and well-thought-out
creations we've ever come across.

It's an offline online MMORPG.
See, you're confused too! Basically,
the game fools you into thinking all
the other characters are real people
playing a multiplayer RPG.
Which is fine, until you
start factoring in the
anime series that
complements and
complicates the whole
thing. It's so deep we've
even started to question
what's real and what's a
game. Is this competition
even real?

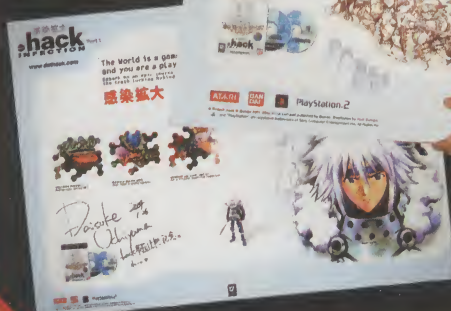
Hell yes, it's real. And
because we want you to

discover the amazing world
of .hack so much, we've
hooked up with our pals at
Atari to offer you the chance to
win a very special prize. One
lucky winner snatches a copy of
the special edition of .hack on
PS2 that comes bundled with a
45-minute anime DVD, a PS2, a
portable DVD player, a .hack T-shirt
and – get this – two totally
exclusive and totally wicked .hack
art boards! Someone's written on
the boards and the T-shirts, but
we'll wash that off before we send
them to you. No, we are JOKING!
They're signed by the crazed genius
minds behind the phenomenon,
making them RIDICULOUSLY valuable
and collectible!

Don't waste your time trying to
work it all out – you need to jack in to
the world of .hack if you want to
make any sense of it. Fill out the
coupon and send it in before we
firewall you! *

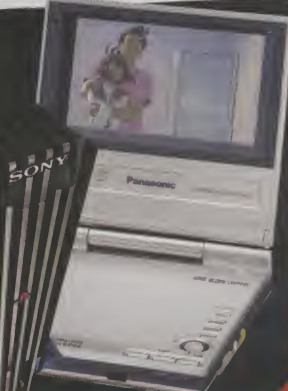


PlayStation 2



WIN ALL THIS!

If you're the the lucky winner you'll scoop a
wicked Panasonic portable DVD player with a
massive 5-inch widescreen display, a PS2, a copy
of .hack Special Edition, a signed T-shirt, and –
wait for it – two totally original, one-of-a-kind
and truly priceless .hack art boards signed by
the creators of the game and anime series!
And, AND, four runners-up will get a
signed T-shirt and a copy of .hack Special
Edition. Holy monkeys!





SIZE ATTACK!

COMPETITION

**HACK
THE SYSTEM!
WIN
PRIZES!**

**YOU'VE GOT
TO BE IN IT
TO WIN IT**
Tick one of the
following boxes
A. ☐ B. ☐ C. ☐

★ TITLE:

★ FORENAME:

★ SURNAME:

★ ADDRESS:

★ POSTCODE:

★ DAYTIME TELEPHONE NO:

★ EMAIL:

Send your entries to: Computer And Video Games, CCVG404A, Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford, BD1 5RZ

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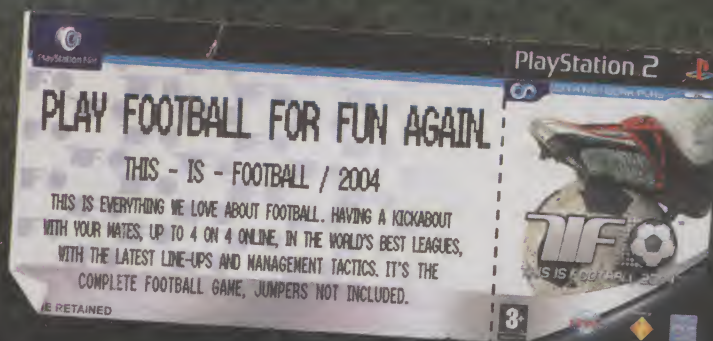
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fun,
anyone?
PlayStation 2



REVIEWS

THIS MONTH

FULLY INDEPENDENT & MULTI-FORMAT TRUST NO-ONE ELSE



Metal Gear Solid The Twin Snakes
CVG's very own snake eater, Alex Huhtala, doubles his pleasure with the remake of the world's favourite stealth game



Rainbow Six 3
No stranger to shouting orders and acting like an ego-crazed commander, Steve O tastes the rainbow (of pain) for PS2's killer shooter



Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles
Resident RPG-nut Lee tickles his Moogle, all in the name of reviewing this month's big first-party Cube release

PANDORA'S BOX OR SOLID'S TWIN SNAKES?



Roll up, folks. Sam Fisher and Solid Snake are facing off again for the biggest

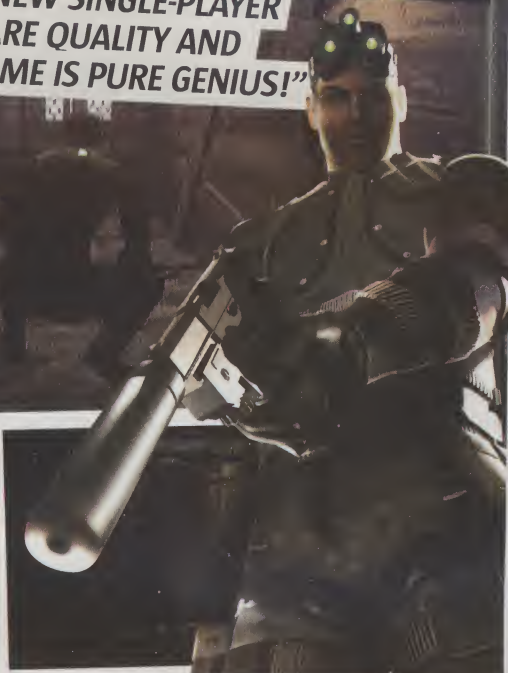
fistfight since, well, the last time the two faced off with MGS2 and the first Splinter Cell game. I reckon the smart money's on Sam. After all his is an all-new game in a real-world setting, and you can do the splits – up walls – online! Shame it's got no gigantic robots, but Ubisoft's saving those for the third game. Check the **FIRST UK MULTI-FORMAT REVIEW** of the stealth superstar on page 66.

Lee Skittrell
Lee Skittrell Reviews Editor

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

CVG'S BIG REVIEW P66

"THE NEW SINGLE-PLAYER MISSIONS ARE QUALITY AND THE ONLINE GAME IS PURE GENIUS!"



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HOW CVG'S REVIEWS WORK

CVG's reviews are the most accurate, informative and downright honest you'll ever read. Here's why...

Reviews MAR 26 CRYSTAL BALL PREDICT 1

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

THE BEST SHOTS

GAME INFORMATION
When's it out? What online options has it got? Everything you need to know is here

HARD FACTS & STATS
Here you'll find the developer's softography, must-know facts about the game and cool trivia!

SECOND OPINION
Every one of CVG's experts plays every game we review, and if they've got something to add to the review, here's where you'll find it

CVG VERDICT BOX

GRAPHICS
How sharp it looks, smoothly it moves, how good the effects are... That's all covered here

SOUND
Does the sound, whether it's ambient noise or a killer soundtrack, complement the game? If so, expect a high score

GAMEPLAY
Is it fun, fresh and addictive as hell? If a game scores well here, we guarantee it's great fun to play

LASTING APPEAL
It may be great fun, but is it all over in a flash? Or will it last for months?

OVERALL
Taking everything into account, is it actually any good? (Note: this is not an average of the other scores)

89

CVG SCORES

By popular demand, CVG has switched to percentages to bring you the most precisely calculated scores ever!

- 95+ DIAMOND Award
- 90-94+ GOLD Award
- 85-89+ SILVER Award
- 75-84+ You'd be pleased to get this as a gift, though next month you'll probably forget you own it.
- 65-74+ Some fun to be had but one best bought by your mate so you can get a lend of it.
- 55-64+ A pretty average game that's unlikely to set the gaming world on fire on any level.
- 41-54+ You really shouldn't even consider renting one of these, let alone buying one.
- UNDER 40 STINKER Award

THE CVG AWARDS SYSTEM

We score everything out of 100, to give you the most accurate reviews ever. And if a game is exceptional, we'll give it an Award, so you know what a diamond game it is...

- DIAMOND Award**
The most coveted award a game can get. It's worth buying the console just to play it!
- GOLD Award**
A bloody amazing game you've got to own. It's brilliant in almost every respect, so go get it!
- SILVER Award**
Highly recommended by CVG's experts. May not be anything groundbreaking but it's still ace.
- STINKER Award**
More abominable than a reality TV show, set in a barbers, called "I'm a Yeti..."



RELEASE DATE

26 MARCH

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: UBISOFT
* DEV: UBISOFT
* WWW.PANDORATOMORROW.COM
* CONTACT: 01932 838230

ONLINE GAMING

* 2-4 PLAYERS. MODES:
SABOTAGE, EXTRACTION,
NEUTRALIZATION

EXTRAS

* USB
HEADSET

In this village Sam can risk searching the walkways, or sneak beneath in darkness

Always check the next room using the optic cable before opening any doors

Mines won't give you a second chance so tread carefully. Better yet - use thermo!

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

If this were a girl it would be Beyonce



e survived the first Splinter Cell with nerves intact, but only just. Sure, you can be special ops tough-guy Sam Fisher on screen, but inside

your guts quiver like Rik Waller's chins.

Getting through it all, however, taught us how to use stealth with confidence. Now, the thought of sneaking around in the dark no longer makes us whine like puppies. Instead, you could say CVG is well psyched for all the heart-stopping stealth you can deliver. In fact, you can just call us Sam.

Stepping back into Fisher's boots feels terrific. Fully aware of our talents, as mapped out by the original game, and

looking forward mastering some more, there has been so much promised for this sequel. Games cursed by hype rarely survive the high expectations. Here, though, slick new presentation, enhanced sound, improved AI, and a kick-ass multiplayer mode (a game in itself, we assure you), makes it truly worthy.

YOU'RE PAID TO BE INVISIBLE

Heck, this is tense. See, a Splinter Cell by definition is a battle-hardened soldier who undertakes life-threatening, politically sensitive situations. Nobody except the government knows that guys like Sam Fisher exist, and if a Splinter Cell is captured or killed, the government denies all knowledge of them. A Splinter Cell

Check out the new stuff Sam faces in one-player. Most noticeably, over half the areas are outdoors, as opposed to snooping

SPLINTER CELL SINGLE-PLAYER GLORY

around corridors and offices. Since he gets to wade through long grass, Sam also now owns a cool camouflage stealth suit.

Sam is in here somewhere. It's hard to spot him though, eh? Of course, that's the idea...

While hiding in a river, Sam has only the rushes to fool the torches of patrolling guards

What in hell does Sam think he's playing at here? Asking to have his head blown off?

You've a fair bit of scurrying around tunnels too, like here in this disguised Paris Metro

"MISSIONS ARE DEAD TIGHT AND SAM IS FAR MORE AT THE MERCY OF IMPROVED ENEMY AI"

Taking down the enemy can be achieved with a surprise elbow to the head

This fire stops Sam in his tracks, but if you think about it there's a 'solution'...

LIGHTBULB KILLER

Somehow doing it never gets boring. We loved it in the first game, we're loving it now too.

We're talking about busting lightbulbs, of course. Almost everywhere Sam goes, you'll need to look out for lights to take out - it makes for comforting darkness to move about more freely. This time out Sam has to be even more tactical about choosing his route through levels.

On the Paris-Nice Express, Sam can go through the carriage or... (see below)

Use every available surface to make the most of your agility as a Shadownet Spy

Flash Bang

works alone; watches his own back. There's no covering fire, or buddies to take bullets on his behalf. "You're paid to be invisible," as Sam is often reminded.

When first presenting such a razor's edge experience, Ubisoft's solution was to keep things on rails. It prevented folks from getting lost and, by keeping things tight, created tension. In Splinter Cell 1, there was only one right way. Usually it was three strikes and you're out in terms of raising alarm. For some people this proved a bit much, and they went blubbing to Mum... (or the Ubisoft forums) to complain. In response, Pandora Tomorrow changes the approach a little.

I AM SAM

Sam Fisher can sometimes be the coolest videogame character to grace a TV screen. Even when he's not moving a muscle!

HE WENT DAT AWAY

Routes through an area are no longer limited to one. While the game still confines you to a 'corridor' approach (so you don't stray too far from the action, diffusing tension), Sam now has alternative routes. If you take a shortcut, whether it's rappelling down a wall or sneaking beneath walkways, you could also miss ammo or medical supplies. On the other hand, taking the scenic route keeps you in danger longer.

Pandora Tomorrow also develops the idea of pathways created using shadow. Shoot out lights and dark pathways form, only this time you need to be far more creative about choosing your routes. If you pop this bulb will it let you get close enough to take down that guard, or should you conserve your ammo for later?

MUST'VE BEEN A CAT

Missions are dead tight too: you could be King Careful and still get spotted more than a leopard with clap. As with the first game, certain cock-ups (depending on the mission) meant game over instantly. But now, where Supervisor Irving Lambert used to also allow three tesser, mishaps before

Sneaking up behind people is a crucial skill. You just won't survive without it

aborting the mission, Sam is far more at the mercy of improved enemy AI.

There are three increasing stages of alarm. Firstly, the enemy goes to a higher level of alert - they know of a possible intruder and are on the look-out. Next, if Sam confirms his presence by causing more ructions, enemies prepare for certain confrontation by donning flak jackets and actively looking for Sam. The final stage of alert heaps on the pressure - enemies slap on Kevlar helmets and are committed to hunting Sam down. It's almost impossible to take 'em down (even with a sniper shot) with their heads so well protected. Body-shots just bring them running your way!

Crucially, though, if Sam can lay low for long enough and avoid being killed, the enemy's alert status will decrease after several minutes. Although this isn't entirely realistic, we feel it adds more depth and freedom within the game.

1

There could be someone around the next corner, and this light is gonna make Sam visible

2

Out with the trusty FM-7: aim very carefully at the tiny bulb to save ammo for later

3

Bullseye! Sam is shrouded in darkness. Problem is, now he can't see anything either!

4

Aha! That's what the night-vision goggles are for then. Sam can see, but cannot be seen

...risk going outside. He needs to avoid being seen by the passengers though

Look out for medical kits. You can choose to heal Sam partially or fully in PT

There are three multiplayer scenarios. All involve tampering or protecting these units

1st Floor WAREHOUSE - decontaminating

0:05

CAN YOU FEEL IT?

You can see how good it looks, but you should also know that the sound is mixed in 7.1 Surround for ultra-realistic atmosphere.

In addition to practising stealth by what you can (just about) see and hear you must also react to FEEL in Pandora Tomorrow. Sometimes you won't know you're in danger until you sense it through the controller.

1

Booby traps in the jungle give off a faint vibration. Move slowly to detect them

2

Mines buried around this camp emit a slight heat signature, so switch over to thermo vision

3

Your hi-tech goggles highlight any additional bodies in the area - and they ain't friendly!

4

Dogs will sniff you out too, so have no mercy! They may look cute but they'll only rip your throat out!

Sam uses night vision to sneak around the outskirts on an enemy camp. Shhh!

THE FOUR THE MERRIER

We're more than happy with PT's one-player mode as a sequel - it would've been enough. So we're lost where to begin when praising the multiplayer. Maybe we just tell you what's in store, because the appeal becomes obvious.

Multiplayer Splinter Cell combines first-person gameplay with typical 'Sam Fisher' third-person. Nobody gets to play as Sam; in fact there are no personalities involved. Instead, within the three different game modes, it's the good guys of the Shadownet Team, versus the baddies of the ARGUS Corporation.

Shadownet comprises of spies working for the same organisation as Sam. ARGUS fields mercenary soldiers, who you meet in the single-player game. In every case it's the Shadownet Spies who have the mission objectives to complete; and the ARGUS mercs aiming to stop them.

ÜBER SAM

Shadownet Spies belong to a sub-division of Third Echelon, the same group that commissions Sam. They move like Spider-Man, and have the aura of Batman. Think

A torch is the merc's best friend, and one of the spy's worst enemies. Damn it!

we've said that before, but we just like the sound of it! Recruits are younger and therefore more agile than Sam. They seem to be quicker on foot and all of them can perform a cool move Sam wouldn't dream of trying - the Wall Jump. It's a slick evasion move, allowing spies to run halfway up a wall then push off and backflip to land behind whoever's in pursuit. This can also be adapted to run halfway up a wall then grab onto a ledge.

Spies view their surroundings as a giant climbing frame, loaded with places to scurry through, climb around or cling to - maybe drawing a merc's fire, or simply while finding the best routes to objectives. As an onlooker, it's very unsettling and kind of annoying to watch spies dart through a window to safety, but equally fun to watch them crawl unwittingly into your sights!

OLD DOG NEW TRICKS

He may be old, but Sam is still the best there is. After all, his stealth tactics have got him this far. But he's learned a couple more moves this time out.

And you're definitely going to need them to help him survive. Incidentally, you may find it interesting to know that the Upside Down Shooting technique seen below came from experiments with the multiplayer game!

Wedge Sam between two narrow walls to shift his weight from side-to-side, reach up and get to a ledge

1

HALF-SPLIT JUMP

UPSIDE-DOWN SHOOTING

2

Gymnastic Sam risks a hernia by clinging on by his legs to take shots at folks below. How cool? Very!

3

SWAT TURN

Supposedly based on a real move! With his back against the wall, Sam quickly twirls across open doorways so quickly that he is invisible

THE ARGUS CATALOGUE

ARGUS stands for Armed Guardian Services, a private military corporation. Guns for hire, loyal only to money. As the spies carefully plot their mission objectives, it's the merc's role to stop them - using all necessary force, of course!

In an attacking role, the ARGUS mercs have speed and accuracy of gunfire at long range, spraying bullets while giving chase, swiftly scanning areas within their gun-sights, forcing spies out of their hidey-holes with frag grenades. When a spy

Display all NOSS position

Both spies and mercs have the locations of mission objectives marked on their HUD

"PANDORA DEVELOPS THE IDEA OF CREATING PATHWAYS OF DARKNESS BY SHOOTING OUT LIGHTS"

You can take out that light but ammo is scarce, so are you sure it's the best way forward?

■ When playing as a spy, before you even find a real use for it during missions you'll be running up the walls just for fun.

Give yourself a bit of room to make a run up, then leg it toward a vertical surface (wall!)

Tap the jump (Y) button then quickly tap the roll (B) button to start running up the wall

If there's a ledge within reach, you'll automatically cling onto it

You wouldn't be able to get up here without the aid of this cool new move!

SPYDERSAM

We reckon it's the coolest new move we've seen in ages! This is how to do the run and ledge-hang variation...

Spies can scramble mercs' HUDs with well-timed chaff grenades

"SHADOWNET SPIES MOVE LIKE SPIDER-MAN AND HAVE THE AURA OF BATMAN"

Sam's trademark goggles have been modified for Shadownet's spies

Press **X** to hack the NDSS once it's unlocked.

Spy training explains typical mission objectives and how to get around undetected

This merc is about to be knocked out cold by the spy's surprise leap from the shadows

When a spy takes a merc hostage, he talks to his prisoner via your headset

Mercs can't watch their own backs so leave proximity mines as insurance

Cover your back by taking out every possible threat, especially enemy snipers

Shoot out the water valves, conveniently placed overhead to quench the flames

PS2 AND GC DELAY

Hang in there for the PS2 and GameCube versions. According to Ubisoft, they have been delayed because of 'development issues'

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Splinter Cell, Ghost Recon Rainbow Six, Prince of Persia, XIII

HARD FACTS

■ The voice of Sam Fisher is Michael Ironside, who you may have seen in Starship Troopers and just maybe, Total Recall
■ Sam's supervisor, Irving Lambert, is voiced by Dennis Haysbert who plays President David Palmer in the TV series 24. How cool?
■ The soundtrack composer is Lalo Shifrin, who scored the Mission Impossible tune, also Bullitt, Dirty Harry, Enter the Dragon, Rush Hour...

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Pandora Tomorrow is developed in two places, by two separate dedicated teams. The single-player game was made in Canada, the multiplayer in France

makes a run for it like a frightened rabbit, it's no bother to pop them full of holes. You need to be on the aggressive side when playing as a merc, being sure to clear the way ahead because you are unable to watch your back as easily as spies.

These are definitely the guys to go with if your favourite flavour of adrenaline is a power rage. From a spy's point of view, of course, the mercs are there to be tormented over their lack of agility.

one merc versus spy set-up is the minimum you can have. The only downside (and admittedly it's a fairly big one) is that you can only play via system link or online through Xbox Live. There is no split-screen option, and only

Ubisoft could tell you why – maybe that's why the PS2 version's been delayed. Anyway, assuming you're good to go, you're in line for some of the finest multiplayer action ever devised.

You see, this amazing multiplayer game serves to highlight just why Pandora Tomorrow is so remarkable overall. Unlike any other games in its field, you're trained to respect not just the structures, but every surface too.

Leave mines outside the spies' favourite tunnels to catch them by surprise!

The bad guy! He's planning to unleash a wicked smallpox virus

THE ULTIMATE IN SENSORY GAMEPLAY

The multiplayer game is geared to allow teams of two mercs versus two spies, or three mercs versus one spy (and vice-versa). A one-on-

Sam and the spies claim every handhold and hidey-hole as their own, but must tread carefully 'cos every surface has unique sound properties. Mercs have to know all this too and work it into their tactics if they're to hunt down and capture their prey!
You could say it's all just a fancy game of hide and seek, but the tactical element off and online adds so much depth and tension that the concept becomes genius.

STAND STILL TO MOVE ON

It's all about gadgets when you're an ARGUS soldier. Without the latest hi-tech tools, those spies will be running rings around you!

You'll find the art of hunting requires careful plodding and scanning rather than haring around like you're in a Deathmatch. Sometimes standing still using a motion-tracker serves better than shining your torch into every nook and cranny.

MOTION TRACKER

■ When a spy is on the move, the red mist of your motion tracker breaks to reveal him

OLD FAITHFUL

■ Sometimes your torch can prove to be the most valuable piece of equipment

MIND VS MUSCLE

■ A merc can be upon you in a split second, guns blazing. They have the speed advantage

Takes everything that made the original so cool, and makes it better. The new single-player missions are quality, and the online game is pure genius!

OVERALL SCORE

94

HOW IT COMPARES

SPLINTER CELL 1
SPLINTER CELL 2
MGS 2: SUBSTANCE



RELEASE DATE
26 MARCH

GAME INFO
COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: UBISOFT
* DEV: UBISOFT
* WWW.PANDORATOMORROW.COM
* CONTACT: 01932 838 230

Typical of Sam's boss at Spy Towers: don't kill anyone, have zero fun, not even a smile

STICKY CAM LOVE

Before making a move, check out what lies ahead using Sam's Sticky Cam. It's always on surveillance, so you can use it as much as you like.

Hanging off ledges allows Sam to shimmy past objects too big to climb over

The only way past this broken tower is by clambering along this convenient beam

BE USED, LETHAL ATTACKS WILL RESULT IN MISSION FAILURE. A TRIGGERED ALARM WILL

Fisher on a mission too far

SPLINTER CELL

PANDORA TOMORROW

CRACKING GOOD TIMES

Finding extra ammo and useful stuff like keycards isn't as easy as you'd like. Usually there's a safe to crack or lock to unpick. Bah!

You don't have the luxury of an analogue controller on GBA, so the delicate operation of lock-picking and so on is reduced to accuracy within a time limit. Also, code-cracking depends on you overhearing a clue from enemy hostages.

1

To open this safe, use L and R to rotate the cogs to line up with the metal rod, then the D-pad to insert...

2

If you're successful the safe cracks open and a package appears out of thin air...

3

Use binary encoding to solve this computer hacking puzzle. Basically, make the zeros and ones add up

4

Again with the time limit, but this time you need to nudge the blocks when they flash a darker colour

When you've a game so mighty as Pandora Tomorrow on Xbox, you have to wonder why anyone would try to reproduce it on GBA.

Not for the tiny Nintendo machine the luxury of 7.1 Surround, or enthralling life-like locations. But while there's no chance of feeling immersed in the scenes on GBA, the basic stealth elements have carried over pretty well. Also, for the completists among you, the story ties in to the same events in Xbox SCPT. So, congratulations to Ubisoft for that. Thing is, we don't think this makes for a killer GBA experience and here's why.

SUM OF ALL FEATURES

We're impressed that the new GBA game has Sam Fisher's light-sensitive suit, and with it a necessity to stay in the shadows. Last year's game was more of a puzzle-oriented platform game, whereas this year it's all about stealth. In order to remain invisible, Sam can back up against walls

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Splinter Cell (GBA), Prince Of Persia (Xbox, PS2), Ghost Recon (PS2)

HARD FACTS

- The story is endorsed by Tom Clancy, no less
- 22 objectives that take place within nine missions

DID YOU KNOW?

- One of the designers who works for the French team on Splinter Cell originally worked on the completely brilliant Rayman 2 for Dreamcast!



and shimmy behind curtains, flagpoles, planks of wood, and so on. He also depends more on night and thermo vision to survive situations, and their usage is less scripted. Overall you are given similar tools to survive as the Xbox game, and it's kinda fun to experiment.

OPEN AND SHUT CASE

But toying with Sam and the guys he deftly knocks unconscious soon becomes a routine – not really an enjoyable game. We like that Ubisoft has worked clever ideas such as safe-cracking and picking locks, as well as

Thermo vision shows laser barriers that trigger an alarm if Sam interrupts them

"THE WHOLE THING FEELS LIKE A TECHNICAL DEMONSTRATION"

Sam's Sticky Cam allows him to see where the security camera is tracking. Hide until it's safe

cracking computer codes to disable alarms. Thing is, you're just sitting there thinking it's a bit ho-hum, jumping through hoops arranged by the game's designers.

Although Sam looks cool while monkey swinging and rolling from cover to cover, grabbing guards by the neck and knocking them

unconscious, the whole thing feels a bit like a technical demonstration, rather than entertainment.

Chances are this whole thing will come into its own with the eventual release of the Cube version (still TBC). The first GBA version provided additional features to Cube's and vice-versa, so expect the same to be true again. However, since the Cube one isn't around, we'll have to wait and see if this turns out to be true. Meantime, if you're looking for a great GBA puzzle/platformer try Tomb Raider: The Prophecy or Sabre Wulf instead. *

Technicians fumble their notes before hitting the alarm, buying Sam time to choke them



GRAPHICS

Sam moves brilliantly. Thermo and night vision are cool, plus lots of scene variation

91

SOUND

The music's good but you may want to turn it off to hear footsteps and guards going 'Urgh'

82

GAMEPLAY

Being sneaky isn't ideal for a gripping GBA experience, though it may be clever

77

LASTING APPEAL

You're all done when you reach the end, but GC connectivity could extend its usefulness

73

A good-looking and stealthy GBA game, with lots of clever features. It somehow manages to lack huge entertainment value, though

OVERALL SCORE

79

HOW IT COMPARES

TOMB RAIDER: THE PROPHECY
SPLINTER CELL 2 GBA
SPLINTER CELL 1 GBA



PlayStation 2 and PlayStation are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. SOCOM II is a trademark of Zipper Interactive. The U.S. Navy provided technical assistance for the development of SOCOM II.

Looking after number 1 isn't an option in SOCOM II. Using the voice recognition headset, you have to command your crack team of U.S. Navy SEALs to victory once again. And with PlayStation Network Gaming, you can also play up to 15 others online. SOCOM II. Watch out for it.

fun,
anyone?

PlayStation.2

www.socom2-game.com





RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

GAME INFO
COST: £19.99
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: UBISOFT
* DEV: UBISOFT
* WWW.GHOSTRECON.COM
* CONTACT: 01932 838230

ONLINE GAMING
* 1-16 PLAYERS
* 10 MULTIPLAYER MODES, INCLUDING
LAST MAN STANDING, CO-OP AND
SHARPSHOOTER

EXTRAS
* PS2 USB
HEADSET
* BROADBAND
ADAPTER



The harbour's one of the best looking levels, but it's hard to pick out enemy troops

US Marine
Keeping rescued hostages alive is hard when they're so dim

You really have to rely on your fellow team-mates in Defend missions - make sure they cover your back

GHOST RECON JUNGLE STORM

Alpha Team, we have a suspect-looking shooter incoming. Proceed with caution...

Of CVG made games, Jungle Storm would go something like this. Crawling through dense rainforest, you edge up to the enemy camp.

Sensing danger, the gooks jump to their feet, but you're too fast. KER-RACK! Peter Andre takes a bullet in the face and slumps to the ground. Jordan and Kerry panic and start to run. BLA-BLAM! Bravo team's sniper bags 'em both. Who's king of the jungle now, huh?!

But rather than bagging whining celebs, Jungle Storm's missions are a bit more ordinary: plugging terrorists, planting explosives, rescuing hostages. The kind of thing you find in every other army game (except CVG's).

ATTACK OF THE CLONES

Likewise, the combat zones are straight from the training ground. Over the 16 single-player missions (eight new and eight from Xbox's Ghost Recon Island Thunder) you'll fight through rain-soaked jungle camps and war-ridden cities crawling with tanks. All stuff that you've seen and done before if you've earned your stripes in SOCOM.

But what's fresh is Jungle Storm's team-play. Leading a group of six marines, use the tactical map to bark orders and move your teams into position. Set up patrols, ambushes, perimeter defences - whatever. Standard stuff, but it's easy and quick to pull off, even when the enemy's AK-ing your ass.

YOU'RE A ONE-MAN ARMY

You can micro-manage your AI army pals right down to their fields of fire, but left to their own devices they don't shoot much, so you've gotta do the fun stuff yourself! It's up to you to achieve mission objectives, switching between grunts and doing the dirty work yourself. Got to take out a tank

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Ghost Recon Island Thunder

HAIRY FACTS

- 16 campaign missions
- 31 multiplayer maps
- Four troop classes
- Six multiplayer modes

DID YOU KNOW?

- Got PS2 online? Then get Ghost Recon JS and enter the online tourney to win a plasma TV! Check out www.ghostrecon.com for more details.

Rampage! Well, not really. Only shoot the guys with guns otherwise it's game over

patrol? Forget the grenadier, switch over and rocket the gits yourself. So you're always in the thick of the action and experience every aspect of the battle first-hand.

For every campaign mission completed, a multiplayer extra is unlocked. And it's online where Jungle Storm really rocks. It's packed with too many modes and maps, none of which are bad. Last Man Standing is obvious but still cool and blasting through the campaign in co-op gets us going every time.

It's just a shame the single-player game isn't quite so versatile. Sure, it's good, and the campaign missions are as good as anything SOCOM serves up, but there just aren't enough of them. Still, the twenty quid price tag certainly helps. *

"YOUR ARMY PALS DON'T SHOOT MUCH, SO YOU'VE GOTTA DO ALL THE FUN STUFF YOURSELF!"

Lesson one: when you see the enemy, shoot him. Lesson two: get less retarded team-mates

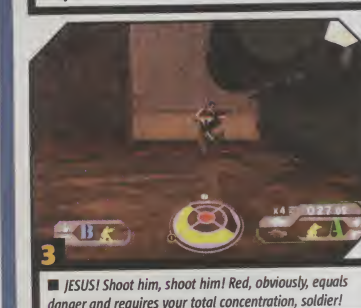
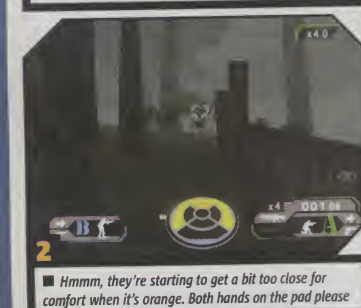
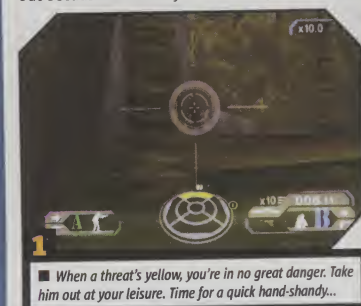
The eye on the right of the screen shows how visible you are. Stay low and you'll be fine

You don't get much of an edge on night missions and are still easily spotted

I SEE YOU!

See the radar in the centre? This helps you through most of the missions... a bit too easily.

It's actually a threat indicator that's pretty much idiot-proof. Not only does it show the direction of the enemy, but also how far away they are. If the bar's yellow, you're okay for the moment. But when that puppy turns red, watch out because the enemy are crawling all over you!



GRAPHICS
Plain-looking, slow and at times jerky, it's no looker - especially next to Rainbow Six 3 **63**

SOUND
Booming bangs and rattling gunfire is cool, but military fanfares are borderline cheese **71**

GAMEPLAY
Slow-paced and more calculated than full-on blasters, but just as gripping and rewarding **84**

LASTING APPEAL
One-player's too short, but online it's bloated with modes and maps to last for months **85**

SOLID GAMEPLAY AND CLEVER MISSIONS PARTLY MAKE UP FOR CLUNKY GRAPHICS, BUT UNLESS YOU'VE GOT YOUR PS2 ONLINE THEN YOU WON'T GET MUCH OF A GAME.

OVERALL SCORE
78

HOW IT COMPARES
RAINBOW SIX 3
JUNGLE STORM
SOCOM 2

12 MAR

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-2

* PUB: CODEMASTERS
 * DEV: CODEMASTERS
 * WWW.CODEMASTERS.CO.UK/LMAMANAGER2004
 * CONTACT: 01926 816 044

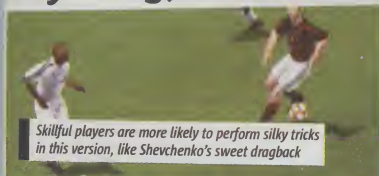
* YES (XB):
 * DOWNLOADABLE PLAYER
 * AND TRANSFER UPDATES
 * WITH REVISED STATS

* XBOX
 * COMMUNICATOR
 * HEADSET AND
 * VOICE CONTROL



LMA Manager 2004

The Wayne Rooney of videogame football management - young, fresh... and a bit dumb



Skillful players are more likely to perform silky tricks in this version, like Shevchenko's sweet dragback



At the end of every game you can watch highlights of the match and mess around with the replays

Let's face it - management games are the fat, pus-faced sister of football hotties like Pro Evo and FIFA. Yeah, Champ Manager's as addictive as injecting crack into your love-truncheon, but it looks like a pig's arse.

LMA, however, is tastier than the birds in Footballers' Wives (apart from that old munter that was in Eastenders). Every menu is clear and attractive and they're negotiated quickly by a control system that uses the shoulder buttons to shift between screens. It takes a bit of practice, but that's never any of the sheer mingin'ness that made Premier Manager unplayable.

You'll soon be whizzing through the interface, picking your team and arranging

lucrative transfers. It's quick, accessible footie management for fans who want to be the boss but can't be arsed with the tedious stuff and bad jackets.

JORDAN-SIZED BOOBS

The dull bits don't really matter, 'cos every manager knows he earns his pay on matchday. LMA 2004 uses a 3D match engine that hasn't changed much from the last version, although the AI's been tweaked and there's more scope for on-the-fly decision-making. There's enough tactical challenge to make your brain feel mooshier than Alex Ferguson's chewing gum, but you can always react to problems quickly and easily.

The match itself is far from perfect though. Star players make stupid mistakes like Jordan gets boob jobs, the pig's bladder zips around like a ping-pong ball and everyone stumbles around like they're on horse tranquillisers. The lack of realism doesn't stop there - the transfer market is busier

PREVIOUS GAMES

- LMA Manager 2003
- Club Football
- Colin McRae 04

HARD FACTS

- 19k international players
- 750 clubs including South American teams
- Playable clubs from 12 divisions in five nations
- Six new player skill attributes

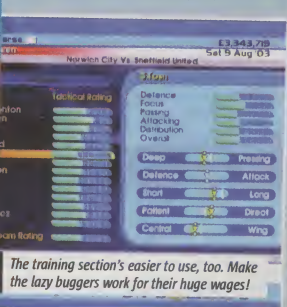
DID YOU KNOW?

■ Jug-eared Gary Lineker and sour-faced Alan Hansen do the commentary in LMA, and in this version there's loads of unscripted 'reminiscences' about their careers. By unscripted we mean... boring.

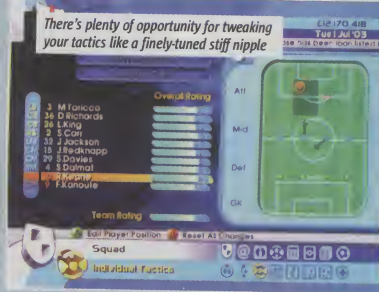


than a sperm bank on student loan repayment day. Within one game-week of playing as Spurs we'd sold Jamie Redknapp to Arsenal for eight mil and Robbie Keane was getting 20 mil chucked at him by every club under the sun. It's fun if you want to grab all your favourite players, but about as realistic as Wolves avoiding the drop.

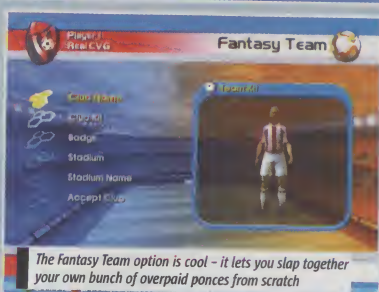
That's sort of the point, though. LMA's Footballer's Wives-style approach to management (all big buck transfers and over-the-top matches) make it an accessible fix of console footie strategy, even if it is a bit daft. *



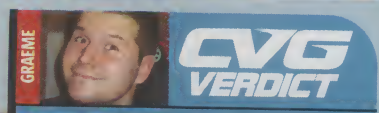
The training section's easier to use, too. Make the lazy buggers work for their huge wages!



There's plenty of opportunity for tweaking your tactics like a finely-tuned stiff nipple



The Fantasy Team option is cool - it lets you slap together your own bunch of overpaid ponies from scratch



GRAPHICS

Nice clear menus and simple interface let down by dodgy match engine

SOUND

The music's pretty good but the matchday howls and commentary are stilted mince

GAMEPLAY

The hyperactive transfer market and streamlined options keep things fun

LASTING APPEAL

Keeps your management muscle massaged until you die of high blood pressure

Streamlined management with minimal dull stuff. It can't touch Champ Man 4 for depth, statistics and realism, but is still top of the console premier league.

OVERALL SCORE

81

HOW IT COMPARES

CHAMP MANAGER 4 03/04
 LMA MANAGER 2004
 PREMIER MANAGER 03/04

IF IN DOUBT, SHOUT IT!

One of our fave new features is the way Xbox Communicator lets you bawl instructions to your players.

Sure, you could just press a button, but we reckon your players react better when you're gobbing spit over the TV screen, yelling useful advice like "KICK HIM IN THE BALLS YA FANNY!"



1 Scottish Cup final, Old Firm rivalry in full effect, Boyd's Bhoys 2-1 down with fifteen minutes on the clock...

1

2 "SORT YOURSELVES OUT YOU USELESS PILES OF PISH! Oh, and all-out attack, please lads. Thank you"

2

3 The Celtic players respond and pile forward - time's almost up but here's a last ditch cross...

3

4 Sutton leaps like a salmon and it's in the back of the net! Easy, this football management stuff!

4



"THERE'S ENOUGH TACTICAL CHALLENGE TO MAKE YOUR BRAIN FEEL MOOSHIER THAN FERGIE'S CHEWING GUM"

Changing your tactics mid-game is easy - here we pushed Mutu up to exploit Arsenal's offside trap



RELEASE DATE

MAR 26

GAME INFO

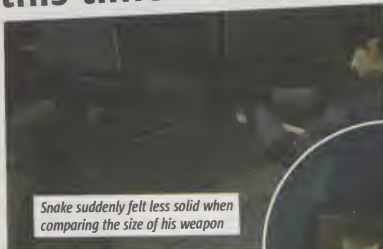
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: KONAMI
* DEV: SILICON KNIGHTS
* WWW.KONAMI.COM/TWINSNAKES/
* CONTACT: 020 8582 5573

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

Another rubbish Nintendo remake? No way – this time it's Solid Snake!



Sneakily felt less solid when comparing the size of his weapon



Sneak was always lethal in unarmed combat. Now he moves even better

You know how the porno industry has that habit of remaking popular Hollywood movies but changing the title into something far wittier? Like Good Will Hunting becomes Good Will Humping, X-Men turns into XXX-Men and Titanic becomes... well, you get the idea.

When we first heard the title of Solid Snake's latest outing we couldn't help thinking that someone in the games industry is trying to make inroads on this lucrative sideline. Twin Snakes! It conjures up images that would have the legendary Ben Dover frothing at the mouth.

OUT OF RETIREMENT...

But forget the double-entendres and we're still left with something that has us frothing too. Twin Snakes is a remake of the legendary Metal Gear Solid, merged with the innovations of the sequels Sons Of Liberty and Substance, and topped-off with all the spit and polish you'd expect of a brand new first-party Nintendo game.

Okay, so it may not be an all-new outing for Snake but that won't sour the

enjoyment you'll have playing Twin Snakes. So why does it still work? Why buy something you've probably played before?

The answer is simple. It may be half a decade old, but Metal Gear Solid still craps on most new games. And for those whose only experience of Metal Gear is through the PS2 and Xbox sequels, we'll let you in on a little secret: Metal Gear Solid may not have looked as pretty or even had as many of the features as Sons Of Liberty, but from start to finish it's a far better game, both in terms of action, story and pure balls-out fun. Argue amongst yourselves if you like, but we stand by our claim.

CAN I GET A REEE-MAKE?

In case you don't know, Metal Gear Solid sees legendary hero Solid Snake tackle a terrorist organisation called FOXHOUND that's taken control of an Alaskan nuclear missile facility. Your mission: infiltrate the

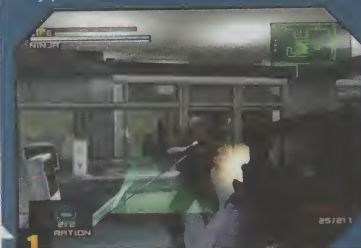
base, twat the terrorists and neutralise the weapons of mass destruction. The original raised the bar, with cinematic cut-scenes, hours of recorded dialogue, memorable boss fights and the essence of stealth.

And as remakes go, Twin Snakes is one of the most successful we've encountered. From the opening level onwards it feels like you're in familiar territory, yet you're always surrounded by an air of surprise.

BOSS BATTLE

Metal Gear Solid has always been incredible to play. Revisiting makes you realise how good it is simply by how much you remember.

One area where the original exceeds the sequel is with boss fights. Each enemy feels alive and has a history. They're expertly introduced throughout and when you finally battle them, they present a new and exciting challenge.



1 Grey Fox spends most of his on-screen time off it, due to his invisibility suit. He's a deadly foe and fast



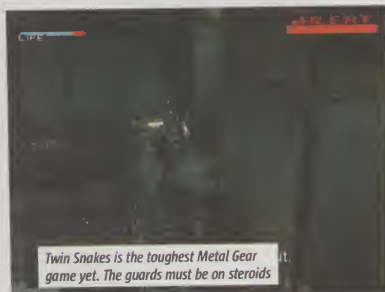
2 Psycho Mantis reads minds and your memory card! The way to beat him is a legendary gaming moment



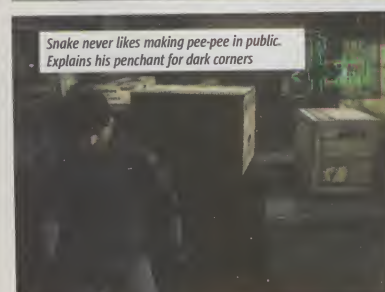
3 Raven has a massive chaingun but is so slow. Use his pace and your remote mines to your advantage



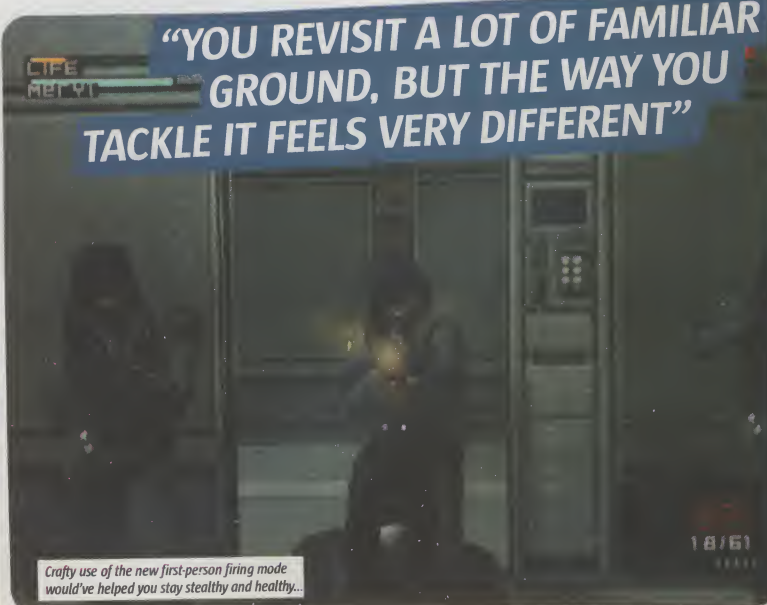
4 Snake faces Grey Fox again. They're so hard they fight in a burning room and don't care about frying!



Twin Snakes is the toughest Metal Gear game yet. The guards must be on steroids



Sneak never likes making pee-pee in public. Explains his penchant for dark corners



"YOU REVISIT A LOT OF FAMILIAR GROUND, BUT THE WAY YOU TACKLE IT FEELS VERY DIFFERENT"

Crafty use of the new first-person firing mode would've helped you stay stealthy and healthy...

Guards can hear your footsteps, follow blood trails and even footprints. Better be careful!

■ Metal Gear Solid brought in a new era of stealth-based gameplay. Eliminating a guard can be performed with a unique

A VERY SNEAKY SNAKE

level of freedom. Throw a grenade, shoot them, fire a tranquilliser dart, or sneak up behind and choke them to death. Nice.

That lone soldier is guarding his corner of the compound so carefully he won't move!

We can't take him face on as he's watching the path, so perhaps if we go under this truck

No-one bothers to check under here so we can lie and wait for just the right moment...

Carefully aim at this head and the tranquilliser in that dart means he'll be out for hours

"GUARDS ARE SMARTER THAN BEFORE, THEY HEAR BETTER, SEE FURTHER AND THERE'S MORE OF THEM"

The Alaskan miniature railway ride was never very popular with the tourists

Those guards are far below but they can still hear your footsteps if you run

We love Snake so much we've all got MGS names. Lee is Stiff Squirrel

RUSTY BULLET WOUND!

When you catch sight of a naked, slumped body, you realise Metal Gear really is special and is doing something radically new

They're smarter, so there's nothing unfair about capping them from a nice safe distance

Come on Snake now's not the time for a conga! You're not at a wedding!

With the duck button and holding down the first-person view you can recreate Time Crisis

Security cameras cause real headaches. Use Chaff grenades to disable them

Only in a game of real quality is there a unique animation if someone is knocked over a railing

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem
- Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain
- Cyber Empires

HARD FACTS

- You want more reasons to replay? Try these Extras
- Casting Theatre
- Boss Battle Mode
- Ghost Pictures
- Collectable Dog Tags for every guard

DID YOU KNOW?

- David Hayter, the voice of Solid Snake, wrote the scripts for the X-Men movies and is also the announcer that proclaims "It's in the game" before every EA Sports title

SMARTER, TOUGHER

For a start, the guards are far smarter than before: they hear better, they see further and there's more of them. If they're alerted to your presence, an area is swarmed by heavily-armed troops wearing full body armour and carrying protective shields. Difficult to shoot and tricky to sneak away from, you immediately realise that this is a much tougher prospect than it was before.

To help fight the terrorist threat Snake has plenty of new tricks, or rather, tricks taken from Metal Gear Solid 2. The first-person view, hiding bodies in lockers, Snake's ability to hang off

ledges and a number of new weapons mean that you can tackle the famous original game in a totally new way. It's probably these features most of all that make Twin Snakes work so well. Yes, you're revisiting a lot of familiar ground, but the way you tackle it feels very different.

THE SAME...

Another reason why you'll enjoy playing if you devoured the original is the sheer sense of joy at rediscovering just how good MGS was, and still is. Here's where Twin Snakes starts to get very clever. If you know the original inside out, you'll soon notice subtle changes in the remake. Different dialogue, items in new places,

Is that Solid Snake in a ventilation shaft or Peter Andre doing a Bushtucker Trial?

Nintendo toys, re-recorded dialogue, brand new cut-scenes, remixed music and bosses behaving differently. All these nips, tucks and alterations keep you hooked throughout the game, wanting to see what happens next, even though you've already got a pretty good idea.

So, a great game just got better. Unmissable for GameCube owners and MGS nuts who can't wait for Snake Eater. *

FUN WITH LOCKERS

The foot-lockers in Metal Gear Solid 2 added an all-new gameplay twist.

Unlike the original, guards' bodies didn't vanish after you killed them, so lockers presented a useful place to hide their corpses and to remove the evidence of your actions. In Twin Snakes, lockers and non-vanishing dead guards are just one of the many additions to the classic game.

Lockers can be great fun, not only do they often contain a bunch of useful items...

...but you can make like a peeping tom and stand inside to spy on the guards who patrol around

Watch it, though - you never know who might be standing close by, so exiting one can be tricky

CVG 2ND OPINION

This is the best Cube game in months. Who cares if it's not brand new? The effect of Twin Snakes is like watching those Special Editions of the Star Wars movies: you want to stick with it to see what's new, no matter how seemingly insignificant the changes are, 'cos you love the game-world and its lore so much. Cube game of the year so far for me.

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS

A great makeover, almost on par with Metal Gear Solid: Substance

89

SOUND

The remixed score is a bit iffy, but the sound effects are amazing

86

GAMEPLAY

A classic game with new ways to play - bloody brilliant

94

LASTING APPEAL

You'll finish quickly, but there are cool extras to keep coming back for

86

An old game brought masterfully into the present. We would've preferred a new Solid Snake adventure, but this is far better than anticipated.

OVERALL SCORE

89

HOW IT COMPARES

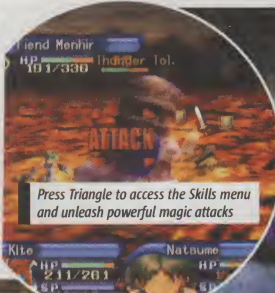
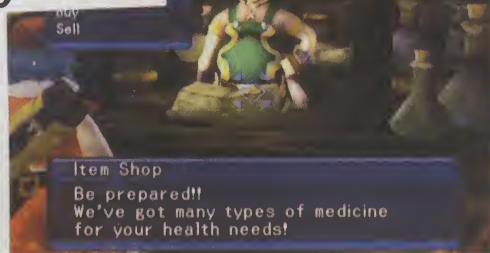
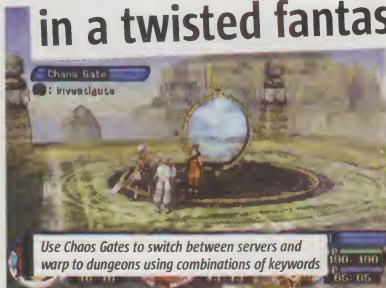
TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL
MGS SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES
ROGUE OPS

DOT

HACK

INFECTION PART 1

Reality sucks, so lose yourself in a twisted fantasy world



If this were a real online game he'd be offering you Viagra or Miracle Nob Grow



Seems like a top idea but in practice online gaming can be a right bitch. Apart from needing a rock 'n' roll PC to actually get wired, once online you can expect to be disgusted and disappointed in equal measure.

Total strangers want to frag you senseless, shag you sideways and generally shit buckets all over your 'newbie' enthusiasm. Yep, it seems online games would be great, if it weren't for the tossers. Which is where .hack comes in.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD

Right, now for the complicated bit. The World is virtual game world set within .hack; it's a Massively Multiplayer Online

HACKING AND CRACKING

As Kite delves into the twisted half-life lurking within The World's infected code, a mysterious 'friend' introduces him to Data Draining.

This banned hacking skill enables Kite to rewrite dungeon monsters' data after disabling their protective shields with physical and magical attacks. Great for weakening opponents, but overuse can have frightening consequences.

1 ■ Batter the crap out of the enemy until you break the protection barrier - the only way to beat some bosses



2 ■ Turn off the data drain animations if you like, but why deny yourself the eyeball-skinning action?

3 ■ This big fishy monster is more than a match for Kite and mates as he flaps his wiffy fins around...



4 ■ ...but Data Draining reduces him to a tiny 'ickle sprat. Easier to deal with, and he'll also drop rare items

RPG kinda like EverQuest, that has 'sold' over 20 million copies. With us?

Anyway, there's a 'real' world too, and the game plot revolves around the disturbing influence of The World on the lives of its fictional 'human' participants. See, it turns out your online buddies are mysteriously disappearing and falling into comas. Could cyberspace fiction be bleeding into reality? It's your job to hack and slash your way through the huge dungeons to the mystery.

SPREADING THE VIRUS

Infection is the first in a four-part RPG adventure, all due out in 2004 (watch out for a comic book and 26-episode TV series too). Each part comes with a bonus 45 minute Anime DVD and the first, Liminality, is a masterpiece, fleshing out the storylines of some of the characters.

Developers CyberConnect2 wanted to accurately reflect the experience of playing a genuine MMORPG, and they've been scarily successful. Like real life, you log

other people, shop for equipment, or use a blend of keywords to warp to dungeons.

And as with most real MMORPG's, the emphasis on real-time combat rather than exploration and discovery. The dungeons are huge, the battles endless, but at times you'll be crying out for a little more variety. And that's its problem - it's all just a bit repetitive.

Still, the .hack universe is so intoxicating you'll find yourself drawn in deeper and deeper, which is not bad for an offline online game. *

PREVIOUS GAMES

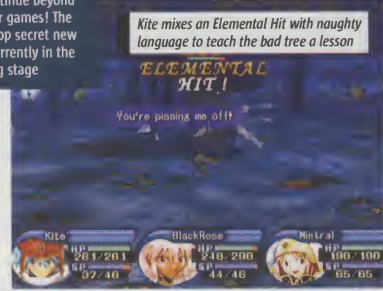
■ Silent Bomber (PSONe)

HAIRY FACTS

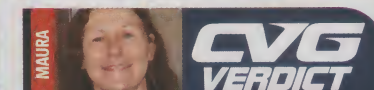
- You can export game data to later .hack episodes
- Secret dungeon locations are subliminally flashed at you when watching the DVD.
- You'll face eight bosses in the course of the game

DID YOU KNOW?

- World exclusive: Bandai bigwigs have revealed to CVG that the .hack project is set to continue beyond the first four games! The previously top secret new project is currently in the pre-planning stage



"ONLINE GAMES WOULD BE GREAT, IF WEREN'T FOR THE TOSSERS. WHICH IS WHERE .HACK COMES IN"



GRAPHICS

Slick cut-scenes and character design, but dungeons sometimes look like vomit on toast

SOUND

Quality voice acting throughout, but like the dungeons, the music can get repetitive

GAMEPLAY

Frenetic battles form the mainstay of the action. Bosses can be tough suckers

LASTING APPEAL

All the benefits of feeling part of a huge online community, with none of the hassle

As a whole .hack is an neat idea. If you can't put up with the tedious dungeon crawling, it's worth risking brain-cramp to discover the secret behind The World.

HOW IT COMPARES FINAL FANTASY X-2
.hack/INFECTION
ARC: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

OVERALL SCORE

77

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FLATTEN MUMMY PAPER THIN, ELECTROCUTE HIM, BURN HIM HALF-ALIVE, LIVE DEATH TO THE FULL.



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PlayStation 2

XBOX



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RELEASE DATE

OUT NOW

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

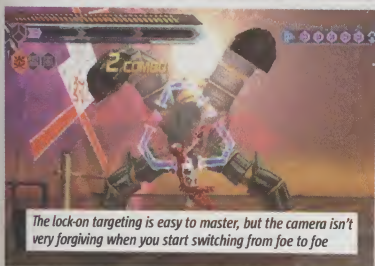
* PUB: SEGA
* DEV: SEGA WOW
* WWW.SEGA.COM/GAMESITE/NIGHTSHADE
* CONTACT: 08456 090 090

NIGHTSHADE

Shinobi spin-off is a right minger, but at least she's got big... personality



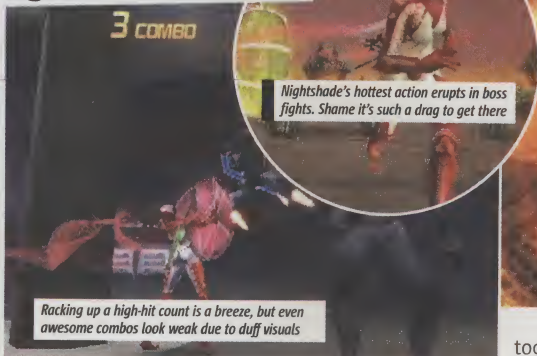
The Stealth Dash is slick: effortlessly flit between and behind enemies, confusing them momentarily



The lock-on targeting is easy to master, but the camera isn't very forgiving when you start switching from foe to foe

There are moments when the action in Nightshade is nuttier than a squirrel's turd, but that's no excuse for it looking like crap too.

Stick it in a line-up with a handful of PSone games and you'd be hard pushed to pick Sega's criminally rough suspect out



Nightshade's hottest action erupts in boss fights. Shame it's such a drag to get there

Racking up a high-hit count is a breeze, but even awesome combos look weak due to duff visuals

from the crowd. Jaggy edges, piss-poor effects and butt-ugly levels. It's hardly the sort of game you'd brag about to your mates. But like most mingers, at least it's got some personality.

Blazing around in a blur as you string together flamboyant rapid-fire Ninjitsu moves feels dead natural. And although there are only several techniques to master – like dashing behind foes, juggling enemies and wall-running – they offer you heaps of freedom as all the moves tie



Cue the mandatory smart bomb attack. Pump up enough special juice from nailing combos then hit a single button to unleash. Taxing, huh!

together smoothly. You can be clinging to a wall slicing up demons and then, in the blink of an eye, shoot through the air to another area and engage in more evil-bashing carnage.

On the flip side, the levels are freakishly repetitive. Shuriken the crap out of a gang of monsters and another batch just poof up out of thin air. Twat those to hell, and another lot appear. Repeat and repeat until you reach the boss (or fall asleep).

Only really worth a look if you can cope with Nightshade's samey old-skool stages and grizzly graphics. *



Even if it had full-blown plastic surgery, Nightshade simply isn't dynamic or thrilling enough to warrant a place alongside the DMCs and Otogis of this world.

OVERALL SCORE

54

HOW IT COMPARES

OTOGI (NB)
NIGHTSHADE (PS2)
SHINOBI (PS2)

RELEASE DATE

12 MAR

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: KOEI
* DEV: KOEI
* WWW.WWW.KOEI.CO.UK/LAUNCH/PT04/

PACIFIC THEATRE OF OPERATIONS IV

Bars are great. You can go fast in cars. Floor the accelerator, burn some rubber – racing games kick ass. Speedboats! They're fast too. You can rip up the waves in a speedboat. Speedboats make for great games as well.

Behemoth military vessels – now they're not so fast. In fact, you couldn't get much slower if you super-glued Michelle McManus's butt-cheeks to her ankles and forced her to walk through quicksand.

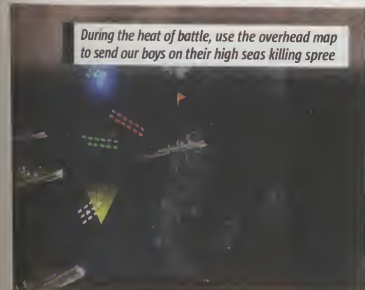
That's why you'd have to be a huge strategy nut to get much out of PTO 4.

A bunch of old battleships and boredom on the open seas

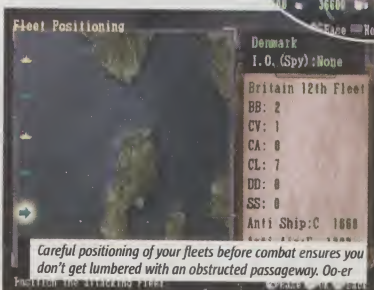
As far as WWII military strategy games go, there's plenty here done right. The game's split into two distinct sections: the strategic command map, sporting lots of depth behind its intuitive interface, and the out-on-the-ocean tactical



Here's where all the pre-battle plans take place. At least it's nice and warm



During the heat of battle, use the overhead map to send our boys on their high seas killing spree



Careful positioning of your fleets before combat ensures you don't get lumbered with an obstructed passageway. Oo-er



You'll fare better tackling an enemy during daylight hours provided your resources are up to scratch

side of things. The latter features some gorgeous real-time graphics all shown through a swooping cinematic camera while you delegate your fleets to victory.

Even so, watching military vessels crawl about the ocean, occasionally blowing stuff up, is about as thrilling as Emmerdale: The Musical. If you're hardcore about your strategy games, big lumbering boats or even if you're an insomniac, then you just might get a kick out of this. Call us shallow, but we like our games a little bit faster and a whole lot sexier. *



The slick presentation elevates this above other games of its ilk, but that aside, PTO 4's really one for the hardcore WWII strategy fiends only

OVERALL SCORE

58

HOW IT COMPARES

ADVANCE WARS 2
PTO 4
DYNASTY TACTICS 2



RELEASE DATE

MAR 26

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: UBISOFT
 * DEV: UBI SOFT SHANGHAI
 * WWW.UBI.COM/UK/GAMES/RAINBOWSIX3PS2
 * CONTACT: UBI SOFT 01932 838 230

ONLINE GAMING

* 1-6 PLAYERS. MODES
 INCLUDE DEATHMATCH,
 TEAM DEATHMATCH AND
 SHARPSHOOTER

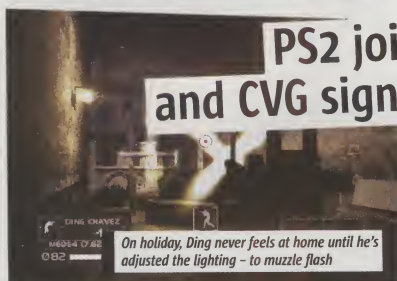
EXTRAS

* USB
 HEADSET
 * ONLINE
 ADAPTER

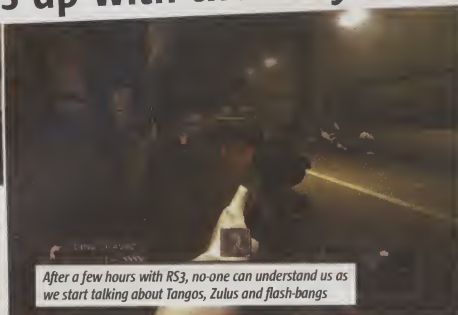


RAINBOW SIX 3

PS2 joins the war on terror,
and CVG signs up with the dirty half dozen



On holiday, Ding never feels at home until he's adjusted the lighting - to muzzle flash



After a few hours with RS3, no-one can understand us as we start talking about Tangos, Zulus and flash-bangs



Once you've cleared the area, you can get your men to diffuse any bombs that are lying around

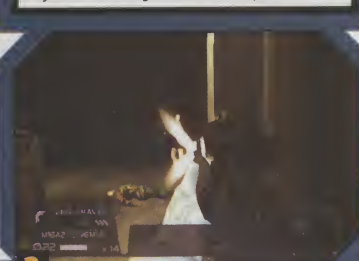
OLD SOLDIERS DON'T DIE

They sure don't. In Rainbow Six, your teammates are so hard that they never die, they just get incapacitated.

So even if you order them headlong into a deadly ambush, you can finish the objectives single-handed Rambo-style and the guys will still be waiting for you back at the canteen for later missions. Just as well they don't hold a grudge...



At first there were four. But send them in blind and they'll all be chewing lead sandwiches pronto



While it's not realistic, the fact they don't die at least means it's not Game Over every five minutes



The good thing about them having a lie-down is you get to hog all the glory and show your mad skills



But with no health pick-ups, your pussy ass will be pushing up daisies in no time if you're not careful



When Uncle Sam wants to seriously gravel-kick some terrorist butt, they call for the Rainbow Six team. This bunch of hostage rescuing,

bullet-head skull-bangers eat Osamas for breakfast, chew up Saddams for lunch and devour anyone left for dinner, before going to bed early to read books about combat zone radio protocol and small arms calibres.

Your job here is to step into the seriously shiny parade boots of Ding 'I'm no dork, honest' Chavez, leader of Rainbow Six, which travels the world thwarting terrorists and defusing bombs. Your team of three will be in tow and, with skilful use of squad tactics, there won't be a hostage situation or terrorist siege you can't handle.

FRUIT BOWL

The first thing to get used to is dishing out commands to your comrades. The orders system is as easy as they come 'cos there are only a few manoeuvres to worry

about, most of them revolving around kicking in doors and bunging in pineapples. Barking orders is also compatible with a headset for those who want to perfect their Hollywood SWAT team impression.

Your wingmen are highly trained individuals and carry out your orders with distinction. When you yell at them to move into a room, they don't just saunter in like stoners and hang around back-chatting. These boys pile in like they mean business, and take cover to keep an eye out in case any terrorists drop in.

POT OF GOLD

Rainbow Six has also really got it rock solid in the graphics department, from the top notch detailing on environment and object surfaces to the well-above-average lighting and animation. Your buddies in arms also look the part and move well, each one casting his own moody shadow.



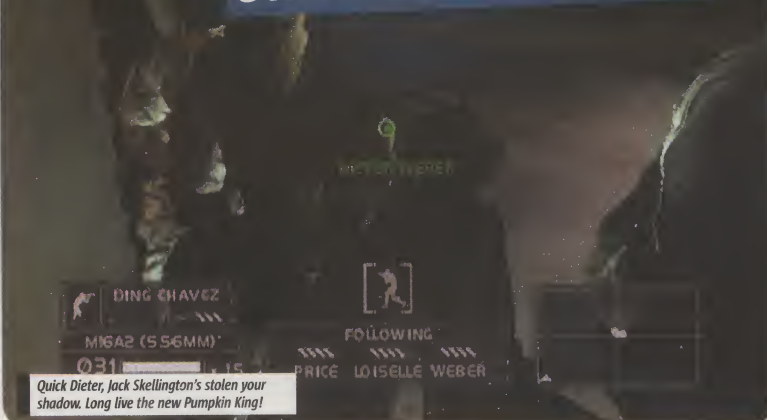
We never tire of thermal vision goggles. You might, we don't

These details in the graphics and locations bring the game to life, with light streaming through windows, fires putting out blurry heat hazes and grenades shuddering the ground, leaving behind a cloud of smoke. Even the muzzle flashes vary for each weapon, and the aftermath of a particularly nasty firefight can look incredibly cool, with smoking grenade impacts, corpses strewn over the floor, and the walls peppered with bullet holes.

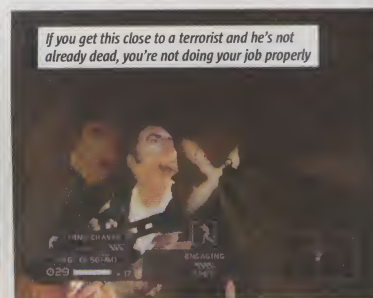
WAR IN BULLET TIME

What with all this detail and PS2 not quite being able to match Xbox's graphical balls, when things really start kicking off the action can slow up a little. But that's okay, as you have to take cover and bide your time here, so you won't be needing to peg around like a headless chicken in

"RAINBOW'S GOT ROCK SOLID GRAPHICS
-YOUR BUDDIES CAST THEIR
OWN MOODY SHADOWS"



Quick Dieter, Jack Skellington's stolen your shadow. Long live the new Pumpkin King!



If you get this close to a terrorist and he's not already dead, you're not doing your job properly



Terrorists come in all shapes and sizes - even wearing dodgy white suits like this one

■ The most common team tactic is clearing a room. You can get your buddies to pile in on their own, or to chuck in a grenade first

BOOM! SHAKE THE ROOM!

(smoke, tear gas, flash or frag). Or get them to wait for your command and pile in simultaneously via different doors.

■ You approach the room where intel says the hostage is begin held

■ Use the orders system to quickly select which type of entry to make

■ You opt for a flash grenade to avoid harming the hostage

■ When the smoke clears, the terrorists are down and the bint is free

"WHEN YOU YELL AT YOUR MEN TO MOVE INTO A ROOM, THEY PILE IN LIKE THEY MEAN BUSINESS"

This mission sees you terminating a bunch of graffiti kids... with extreme prejudice

The list of weapons you get to play with is even longer than the long arm of the law

Pop a smoke grenade to generate some cover for you and your buddies

Those guards are far below but they can still hear your footsteps if you run

BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH

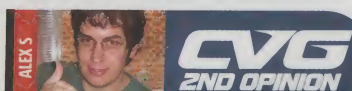
You're rescuing a hostage and a terrorist caps her in the spleen. She then follows you around coughing and spitting like she's on 40 a day. Hilarious

The lower centre bar tells you what your team is up to. Blimey, Loïse's planning a wedding

A nice touch is that the lads change their outfits for each mission

If you do switch to night vision, it helps if your not in broad daylight

You shouldn't run down stairs, but then you shouldn't take hostages and blow tower blocks either.



I love the Xbox version and still play it loads on Live, but I wasn't sure the PS2 could handle the slick graphics. Y'know what? I was wrong. It looks as solid as the Xbox shooter and, apart from a bit of slowdown when things get frantic, it moves as smoothly too. And while the new mission and multiplayer map isn't that much, it's still a cool little extra. Class.



GRAPHICS	86
First-person shooters rarely look as good on PS2 - there's life in the old hardware dog yet	
SOUND	84
Spot-on combat effects and some clever ambient noises really hike the atmosphere	
GAMEPLAY	82
It's not re-inventing the mouse wheel, but it's as good as this genre gets	
LASTING APPEAL	85
Plenty - split-screen and online support supplement a lengthy main campaign	

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Splinter Cell (PS2), Crouching Tiger (GBA), F1 Racing Championship (PSone)

HARD FACTS

■ In single player there are 15 missions, covering seven countries

■ Online has ten maps

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Tom Clancy is one of the most famous of authors in awl America. He started off by writing about techno-war, which was all about imagining what a high-tech war between the USA and Russia during the 1990s would have been like. So, arch-geek.

those moments the PS2 is trying to play catch up on you.

The sounds are also mint, with each gun blasting out its own rhythm. Background noises add atmosphere too, with organ music and bells ringing out when you're in a church up in the Swiss Alps, and opera playing on the stereo system in the rich playboy's Caribbean mansion.

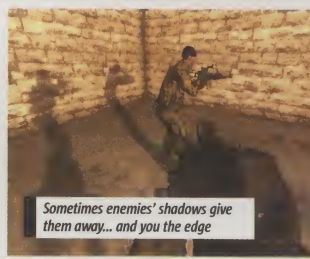
EGO TRIPPER'S DELIGHT

As with many team-based shooters, in one-player you have to be well into the whole squad leader routine. Playing the game well means you getting your boys to

open all the doors and clear the rooms with grenades for you. Which means they take care of most of the killing. But certain missions put a fairly interesting spin on things by stripping your team down to a solitary sidekick, where the dip in firepower means you have to work more closely to survive. It doesn't exactly change the game too much but it does keep your attention span in good shape.

WID YOUR OKLAHOMIES

Online, of course, it's a totally different story again, and barking orders out at a bunch of rednecks



Sometimes enemies' shadows give them away... and you the edge

playing from Oklahoma is always a real laugh if you're all wired up for broadband gaming.

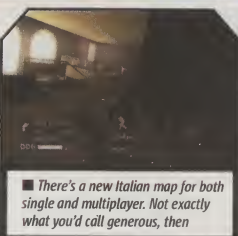
As far as team-based shooters goes on console right now, Rainbow Six is right there up with the elite. It's got blockbuster visuals and hard-nosed tactical gameplay, and gets the balance between gun-slinging action and squad manoeuvres just right. Overall, it just squeaks in over SOCOM II and Ghost Recon. *

MINE'S BIGGA THAN YOURS

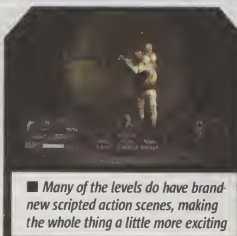
There have been a few changes made since the Xbox version of RS3, but nothing drastic enough to make you want to own it on both consoles. There's a split-screen two-player mode, a new single-player mission and multiplayer map, and then more scripted action set pieces, as well as some tweaks on the death animations. And let's not forget the enhanced opening cut-scene.



■ Split-screen ruins RS3's looks and makes it harder to spot anything. So forget graphical goodness like this



■ There's a new Italian map for both single and multiplayer. Not exactly what you'd call generous, then



■ Many of the levels do have brand-new scripted action scenes, making the whole thing a little more exciting

Team up with Rainbow Six 3 and you're in for some state-of-the-art squad-based gameplay matched by high-calibre visuals that do the PS2 proud.

OVERALL SCORE

84

HOW IT COMPARES SOCOM II RAINBOW SIX GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

More rumbles in the jungle than Jordan and Peter on a waterbed

BEAST MASTER

With his potbelly and googly eyes, Tak's hardly king of the jungle.

Still, he's going to need the entire animal kingdom at his command to make any sort of progress in the game. Learning how to use each animal is a mixture of logic and trial 'n' error, plus there are some pretty funny moments in store too.



1 Rams usually butt Tak into the air, so distract them using a 'sexy' sheep and you can sneak by. Of course!



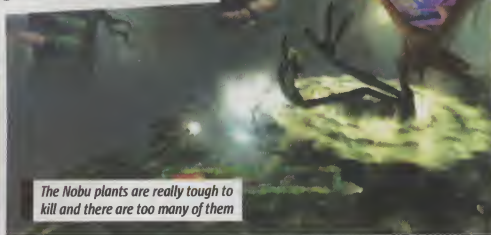
2 Be careful around the orang-utans as they can be angry, but they'll also help you by catapulting Tak



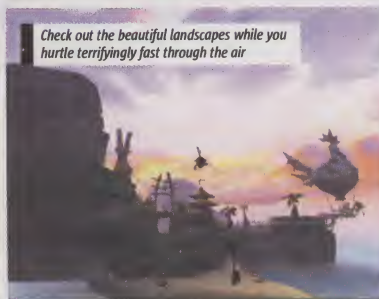
3 Carry sheep on your back and the dumb tribesmen think you actually ARE one and leave you alone. Duh!



4 Target monkeys in treetops with your blowpipe and they'll lob melons at the closest critter. Sounds filthy



The Nobu plants are really tough to kill and there are too many of them



Check out the beautiful landscapes while you hurtle terrifyingly fast through the air

Platform adventures are like cars and curries – game settings may change and the objects and creatures you interact with often

differ, but the basic mechanics are as established as the trusty four-stroke internal combustion engine or a good old ringpiece-scorching vindaloo.

Where Tak And The Power Of Juju tries to spice up the bog-standard platformer action is with animals. From monkeys and orang-utans to chickens, rams and rhinos, it's up to you and Tak to figure out how to use the cutesy critters to help you on your quest to transform the Pupanunu tribe people from sheep back to human form, and so undo the evil handiwork or a rival tribe's shaman.

ME, SHOPPING TROLLEY

Finding new animals and coaxing them to use their skills is wicked cool – at least to start off with. But even this gets dull after

you've seen the same basic puzzle concept repeated for the umpteenth time, only in a different location.

Then add to this the fact that – for the early hours of the game at least – the action doesn't offer anything more than repetitive object hunting. Sure, the levels are beautiful and fun to explore, but this also wears off once you're forced to trek through each area several times over as the Pupanunu's shaman Jibolba adds more items to his shopping list for you to sniff out. What are you anyway, man or shopping trolley?

D'YOU DO JUJU?

Luckily, the game does get a load more exciting three or four hours in. Tak picks up some pretty swish magical Juju powers like speed boosts, Flaming Coconuts and magical Juju Vision, which reveals hidden secrets such as slick pick-ups and quest items. You can even warp to a shimmering twisted spirit realm.

We could go on, but it all boils down to this: Tak's trouble is that it waits waaaay too long before it reveals these better bits. Chances are, a lot of players will have taken one look at the generic and boring opening quests and written the whole game off as just another Vindaloo. Car. Er, platformer.

Frustrating but still enjoyable, full of character and quirky charm, with a bit more spit 'n' polish and tighter game design Tak could so easily have been a classic. Shame. *

PREVIOUS GAMES

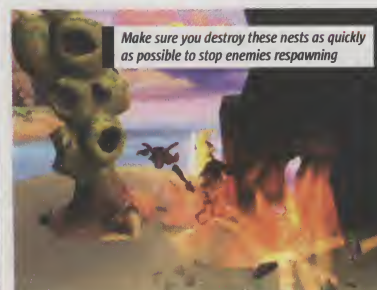
- Rugrats Royal Ransom
- Sega Sports NCAA 2K3
- Mortal Kombat
- Mythologies: Sub-Zero

HARD FACTS

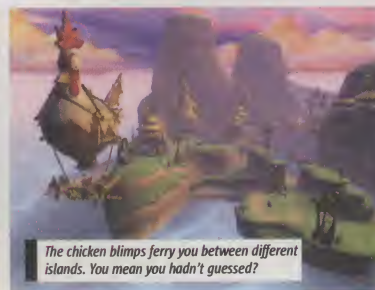
- 12 huge worlds
- Collect nine magical plants before you get any cool skills
- Three hits with the Juju magic will pop enemies' heads in the first boss fight

DID YOU KNOW?

- Tak is a joint project between games publisher THQ and cartoon mega network Nickelodeon. If the game is successful a TV show is a dead cert!



Make sure you destroy these nests as quickly as possible to stop enemies respawning



The chicken blimps ferry you between different islands. You mean you hadn't guessed?

Switch to first-person to take aim – though you're rooted to the spot

"FINDING NEW ANIMALS AND COAXING THEM TO USE THEIR SKILLS IS WICKED COOL"

When they're positioned on the treadmill, wallop these sheep to open doors and gates

Once you have the Spirit Rattle you can see hidden Juju items about the world



GRAPHICS

The lush jungle backdrops and excellent characters are things of beauty

SOUND

The voice acting is great but the jungle tunes more get annoying than Insania

GAMEPLAY

Fairly generic platformer with a few neat ideas of its own

LASTING APPEAL

Starts out weak as a kitten yet gets its claws stuck into you big-time if you persevere

Like balloon-chested Jordan in a diving contest, it takes real effort to get below the surface. If you manage it, there's some fun to be found in this jungle.

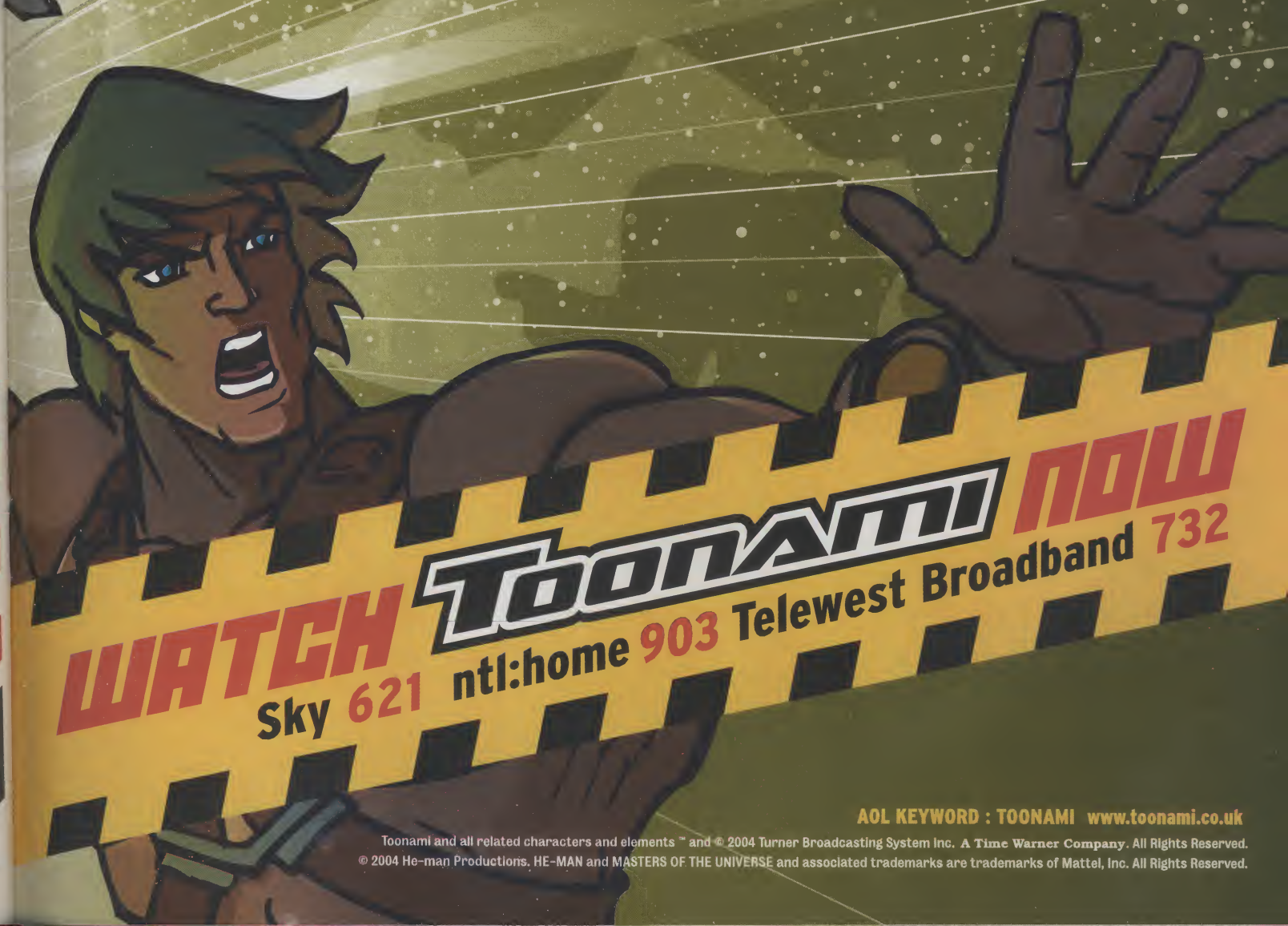
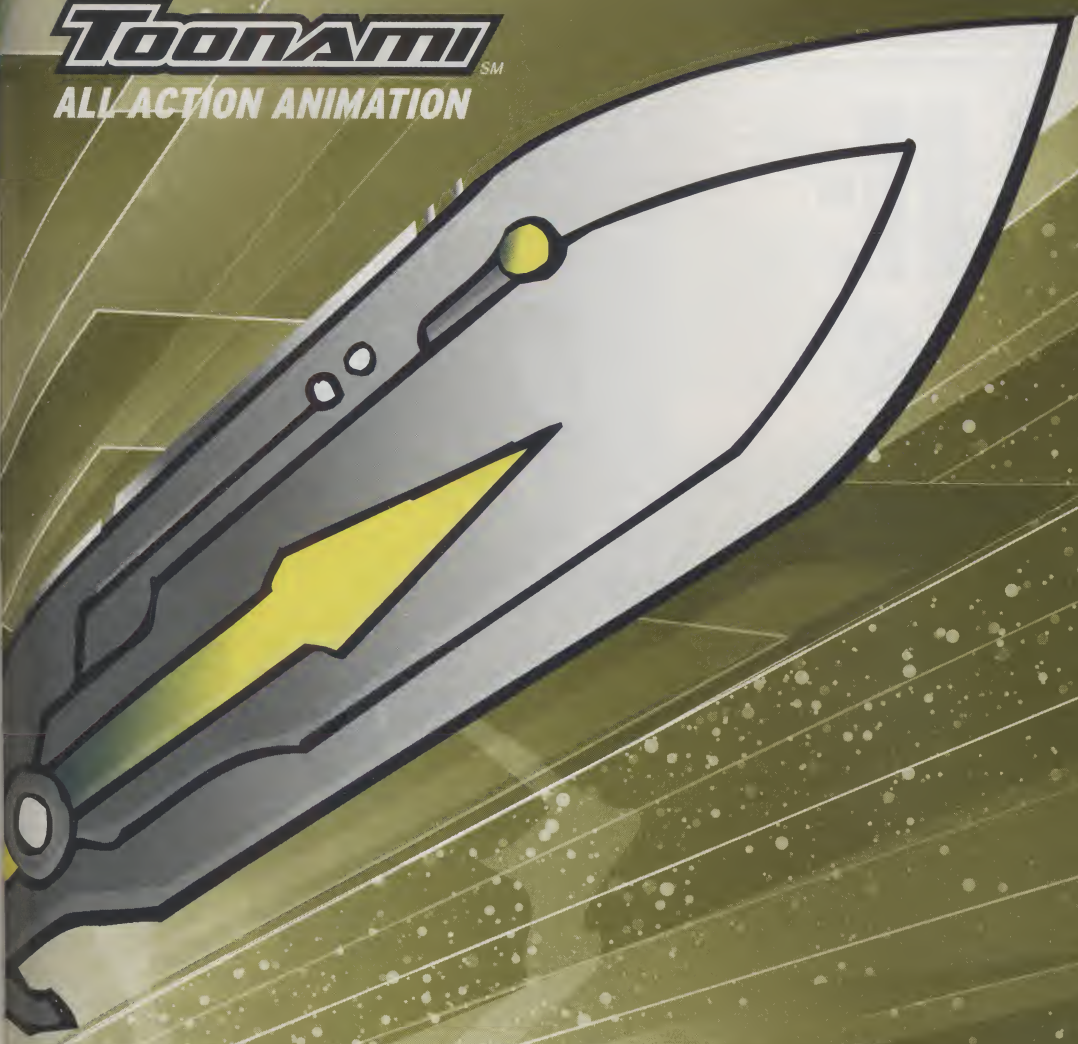
OVERALL SCORE

73

HOW IT COMPARES

TAK II
TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU
SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

TOONAMISM
ALL ACTION ANIMATION



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19 MAR

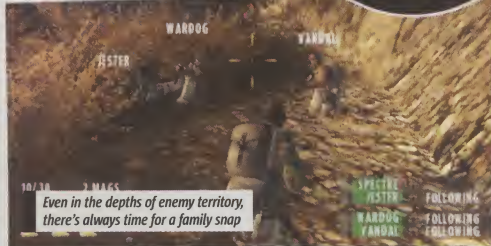
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1PUB: SONY
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CONTACT: 020 7859 5000* 1-16 PLAYERS
* FIVE DIFFERENT MODES OF PLAY
INCLUDING TEAM DEATHMATCH,
CAPTURE THE FLAG AND HOSTAGE RESCUE* BROADBAND
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& VOICE COMMS

SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS

Tackle terror on your telly
from the comfort of your console



One craftily-placed explosive later and this petrol station was nothing but a gaping crater



Even in the depths of enemy territory, there's always time for a family snap



Taking out a tank with your puny pop-gun is never going to work. Rocket-launcher, anyone?

In three secs this guy'll be a bloody stump wedged into the dirt below

We told Zipper last year: if it insists on making SEALS games, it has to be the blubbery, tuna-gobbling simulator sort. But no, just 'cos their first effort shot up the charts and kick-started PS2 online gaming in the UK, they insist on making the sequel into another US Navy elite squad-based military shooter. Fools. Hairy mammals with guns are the future, y'hear?

Anyway, despite this the sequel does at least give you what you'd expect: more of everything. Maps, weapons, play modes... and more questions about how Zipper again fails to make the one-player game much more than glorified training for the real deal: online multiplayer.

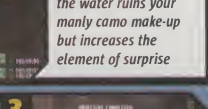
IT'S A WONDERFUL WAR

SOCOM's early missions across the sun-bleached Albanian landscape set the mood nicely and provide some of the most engaging objectives of the entire single-player game. You'll also get a good taste of the game's atmospheric visuals and intense sonic onslaught - link up to a surround sound system and you might as well kiss those ears goodbye

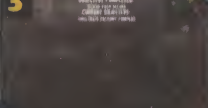
■ Isolated mountain top ruins are just the spot for meeting up with bean-spilling enemy informants



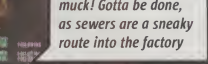
■ Splashing through the water ruins your manly camo make-up but increases the element of surprise



■ Heavy rain swamps an abandoned enemy hideout. Watch it - sneaky enemies exploit reduced visibility!



■ Mmm, tiptoeing through crunchy man-muck! Gotta be done, as sewers are a sneaky route into the factory



We'd like to say it'd at least give you something to do if your broadband goes down. But even allowing for a stupidly frustrating mid-mission save set-up and faffing around learning how to use the USB headset for voice comms, it only takes several hours to finish the dozen uninspired missions (set across terrorist-packed locations like Albania, Brazil and Algiers).

COMBAT AT A CRAWL

Mostly you'll be meeting pretty slow-paced and routine objectives - eliminate target, liaise with informant. There's barely anything here we've not seen before. And with the emphasis so firmly on stealth rather than blazing guns-out brawn, the one-player package is one-part captivating for every four-parts tedious.

Admittedly, you do at least get rewarded for trudging through single-player, but it's with a bunch of new weapons and other unlockables to flaunt online, which is where you've been spending your time anyway.

PREVIOUS GAMES

- SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs
- MechWarrior 3
- Crimson Skies

HARD FACTS

- 12 missions in SOCOM II's one-player game
- 12 new multiplayer maps to fight in
- And you get 10 reworked old 'uns, too!

DID YOU KNOW?

- Sony enlisted the expertise of the US military's Naval Special Warfare Command to give the game that extra sprinkle of in-the-field authenticity. Swish!

night alone with a copy of Gigantic Jugs, a rubber glove and a tub of Flora then you'll be dribbling all over the improvements.

Were talking 22 maps, including ten reworked from the original; Breach and Escort modes; new features like fixed gun positions for laying down heavy fire; destroyable mini-bridges and even new weapons like satisfying rocket-launchers and sneaky anti-personnel mines. All of which adds whole new layers to tactical choice, though as ever it's best experienced in a team that genuinely co-operates. *

Shrubbery provides plenty of cover. Just don't move around or you'll give the game away



"CRAWL SLOWLY. STOP. SHOOT SOME GUY ON THE HORIZON. MOVE ON. Zzzz..."



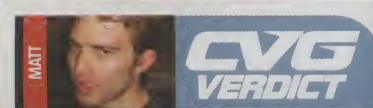
Day One on the 2004 set of 'I'm a Fearless Urban Killing Machine - Get Me Out of Here'



Wonder if unzipping Mr Tinky and wazzing on 'em from up here counts as unarmed combat?



Finish one-player on hardest to unlock the rocket-launcher online? Er, can't be arsed



GRAPHICS

Detailed locations, gritty textures and varied weather drop you deep in enemy territory

82

SOUND

Team-mate banter and nerve-shredding weapon effects bring the scenarios to life

86

GAMEPLAY

Too short and lacking innovation in one-player. Like SOCOM I, it's best with mates

72

LASTING APPEAL

Limited offline, but pay for DSL and it's about as addictive as PS2 online gets right now

74

If online team-play sends pleasurable pulses along your broadband cable and you only own PS2, it's worth a look. But playing by yourself is for losers.

OVERALL SCORE

76

HOW IT COMPARES
RAINBOW SIX 3
SOCOM 2
GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

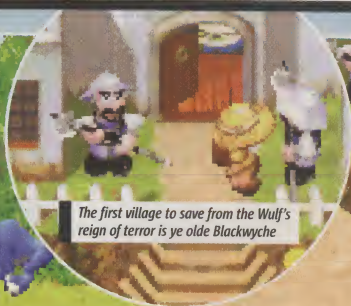
RELEASE DATE

12 MAR

GAME INFO

COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: THQ
* DEV: RARE
* WWW.RAREWARE.COM
* CONTACT: 01483 767656

BLOW UP BIGFOOT!

Solving the puzzles in Sabre Wulf is as simple as pressing B to call up the creature inventory and selecting the sacrificial creature.

Every time you release a new monster from a bag in one of the side-scrolling levels, it is added to your collection for use on future missions. You can purchase them from the shops in villages too – but there's not a lot of tactics when buying.



SABRE WULF

A gaming wolf in GBA's clothing

This month's a real treat if you love animal cruelty. Tak features monkey

slapping, Harvest Moon lets you starve your livestock, and now Sabre Wulf encourages you to abandon or even explode the magical animals in your possession. So why not just save time and money by kicking the cat and then handing yourself in to the RSPCA for prosecution.

No? Okay, Sabre Wulf it is then. And what a weird one it is. Part platformer, part puzzler, and part mad dash to avoid the slathering jaws of the demonic Wulf of the title, it's one of the most fun GBA games in ages.

RETIREMENT VILLAGE

You play as dodderly old duffer Sabreman. While he may look more at home dribbling into his beard in an old folks' home, he is in fact the only person to have beaten Sabre Wulf before, encasing him in stone using a special talisman. The talisman's been broken into

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Banjo Kazooie, GoldenEye, Grabbed By The Ghoulies, Blast Corps

HARD FACTS

■ Eight villages to rescue and amulet bits to recover
■ Escaping Wulf takes four very frantic secs on average
■ 50 coins buys you the essential in-game compass

DID YOU KNOW?

■ It took ages to release 'cos Rare got bought by Microsoft part way through development. It's a remake of the old Speccy game from 1984. Download a freeware version of it here: <http://www.dexfx.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/ss/default.htm> Image: "sabre original"



eight pieces by a mysterious stranger (bloody typical) and Wulf's up to his dirty old tricks again, stealing treasures and even people from the villages.

ANIMAL ABUSE

Gameplay's split fairly evenly between hub-style village areas (viewed top-down) and side-scrolling puzzle levels accessed via holes dug up in the village by the Wulf. Although simple, it's these puzzle sections that make the game so special. Sabreman has no direct attacks and can only jump around, so he has



"PART PLATFORMER, PART PUZZLER AND PART MAD DASH TO AVOID THE JAWS OF THE WULF"

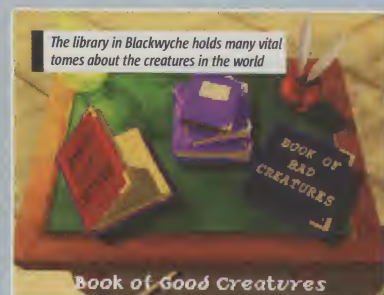


to use the magical animals he collects to reach the goodies at the end of each area (check the box on the left for info).

It's a cool puzzle element and you're rewarded for using the least possible critters and completing stages in the fastest time. The best part though is when you reach the end of each level and steal the treasure from under the snoozing Sabre Wulf's nose. All previous

obstructions in the level disappear and you have to leg it back to the start without getting chomped. It's mental, and again you're awarded bonuses on how many coins you collect in these crazy chase sections.

Taking all elements together, Sabre Wulf is a great little game. It's original and funny, and although it is repetitive it packs enough challenge to keep you entertained long after you've nabbed the final piece of booty. *



GRAPHICS

Tasty pseudo 3D characters and lush bright backgrounds. Brilliant

SOUND

Weird speech and unimpressive jungle tunes let the sound down

GAMEPLAY

Original, unusual but fun. Repetitive yet extremely satisfying

LASTING APPEAL

Perhaps a bit short but there is some replay value to get better times and secrets

A simple but unusual and highly enjoyable adventure played in short bursts of manic action, which makes it great for gaming on the go. Worth the long wait.

OVERALL SCORE

86

HOW IT COMPARES

MARIO ADVANCE 4: MARIO BROS 3
SABRE WULF
BANJO KAZOOIE



RELEASE DATE

NOW

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: NINTENDO * DEV: SQUARE ENIX
* WWW.NINTENDO-EUROPE.COM/
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EXTRAS

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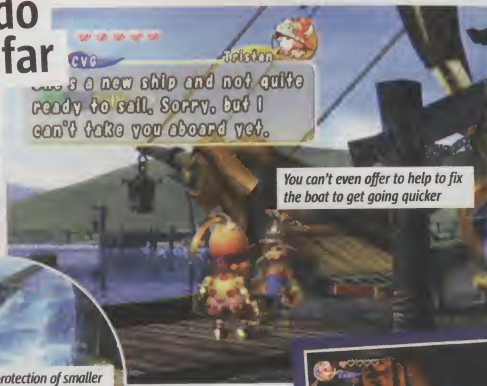


FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

Fabled first Nintendo Fantasy arrives but is far from fantastic



The settings are gorgeous but all too often you're tiny on the screen



CVG: "It's a new ship and not quite ready to sail. Sorry, but I can't take you aboard yet."

You can't even offer to help to fix the boat to get going quicker



Villages have the protection of smaller crystals while cities have right big ones

Finally! Exclusively! Or so shouts the advertising guff for the supposed triumphant return of Final Fantasy to a home Nintendo machine. If the ads were up to us though, we'd slap on the words 'and a bit rubbishy'. It might not help sell as many copies, but at least it'd be more accurate.

Okay, so there's no such thing as a bad Final Fantasy game. But that's why Crystal Chronicles disappoints all the more: it's just an average dungeon 'em up, albeit a multiplayer one, when it should be an explosive spectacular of RPG brilliance.

SHARPEN YOUR KNIVES, LOVE?

It sounds like something from a Romany recruitment pamphlet. You play as part of the Crystal Caravan, a travelling gypsy-style bunch of adventurers who trek the land collecting the precious myrrh needed to power crystals that protect the land from a deadly fog called Miasma.

Your progress is recorded throughout the game in a diary called the Crystal Chronicles, which details every meeting

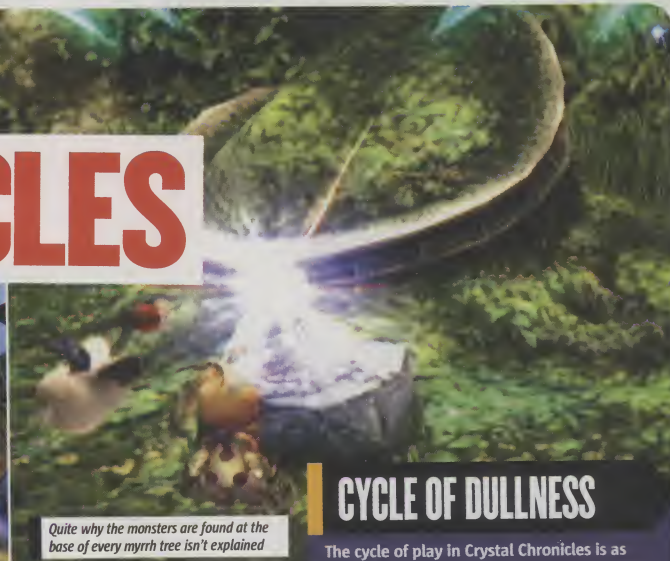
with fellow Caravaners, every dungeon explored and every letter sent home to your hero's folks.

This is the only real plot of the game, and while it's fairly interesting to see your personal adventure transformed into poetic guff, it's hardly on a par with summoning colossal demons 1,000 years into the future, as seen in Final Fantasy X.

IT'S A DIET RPG

In single-player games you are accompanied by your Moogle buddy Mog who carries the myrrh chalice for you. The chalice forms a bubble of protection around your hero, locking out the killer fog. In multiplayer games, one person has the dull job of carrying the chalice (which restricts other players' movement to prevent the group splitting up) while the others fight together.

Long gone are the fabulously complex turn-based battle systems and over-the-top character upgrade and level-up mechanics.

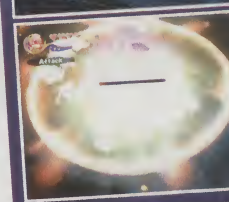


Quite why the monsters are found at the base of every myrrh tree isn't explained

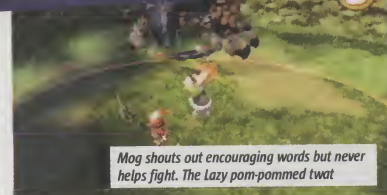
In their place are real-time button-bashing fights, while levelling up character skills is done by collecting items rather than based on experience. Not great.

Likewise, the controls are dead simple too. Cycle through commands like Attack, Defend and magic with shoulder buttons, then execute the order by thumping Cube's big green button. That really is all there is to combat.

And while the controls *have* to be



Hang in there, Kupo!



Mog shouts out encouraging words but never helps fight. The lazy pom-pommed twat

CYCLE OF DULLNESS

The cycle of play in Crystal Chronicles is as predictable as granny's bowels. First you fight in the monster-infested mine, forest or meadow.

Then you face the boss and fill your chalice, before exploring the next town on the map. Lather rinse repeat. There is some backtracking to towns for upgrades, but you never need to go back to dungeons once dusted.



1 The beautiful backgrounds might change but essentially the gameplay remains the same



2 Boss fights, like the battle with this giant Malboro, are extremely repetitive, just like the rest of the game



3 Defeat the boss and place your chalice on the plinth beneath the myrrh tree to collect the sappy goodness



4 Explore the nearest town to exchange your newly acquired gil and metals for equipment upgrades

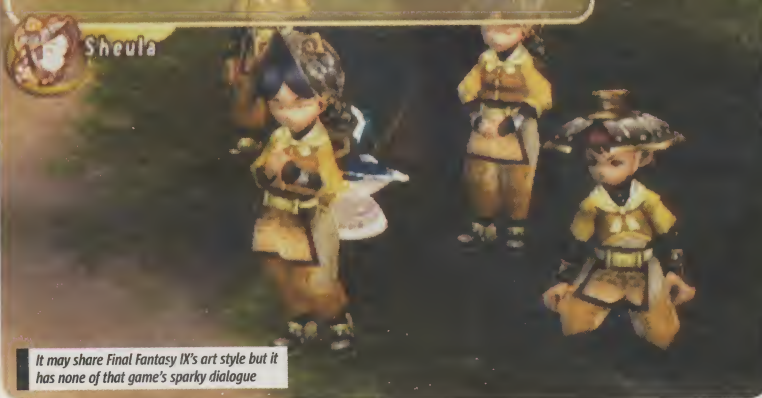


Cast magic spells by charging power then aiming with the blue targeting ring



Gravity spells work best against flying enemies like these laser-eyed birds

"THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A BAD FINAL FANTASY GAME - BUT THAT'S WHY THIS DISAPPOINTS ALL THE MORE" than when you started.



It may share Final Fantasy IX's art style but it has none of that game's sparky dialogue

■ We know all about bully boy bosses on CVG. Alex often stomps round in his jackboots, threatening to staple our nads to our

BOSS IN BOOTS

chairs if we chatter. The bosses in Chronicles each have several forms to bust, making them almost as scary as AL.



He's electric, and a crab, and he also really wants to pincer you up a treat

Physical attacks and fire magic work against crabby, but he's strong and well tooled-up

Keep at him and his outer shell cracks to reveal pulpy inner goodness to smash

After repeating the same simple attacks for about ten minutes, he'll die. Fun? Not really

"BEAUTIFUL TO LOOK AT AND EXTREMELY LIGHTWEIGHT, SO THAT BEGINNERS CAN GET TO GRIPS WITH IT EASILY"

The difficulty is adjusted depending on how many players are on the adventure



Find the blacksmiths in the towns you visit to buy new weapons and armour items

The simple dungeon puzzles include finding these keys and putting them on pedestals



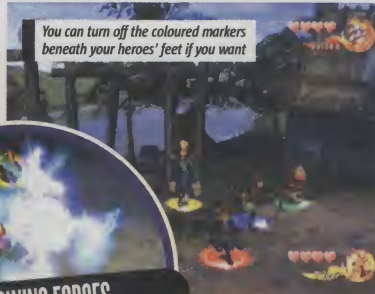
The map looks nice but is essentially just a grid you have to navigate

Smash the mine cart into boxes to open up new routes to explore



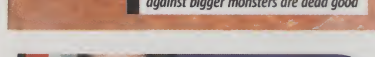
JOINING FORCES

In multiplayer, you can all charge up different magic spells and then combine them on a single enemy to inflict major damage.

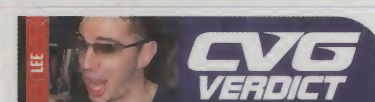


You can turn off the coloured markers beneath your heroes' feet if you want

The blurry swirly effects when fighting against bigger monsters are dead good



Wow - surely the first Final Fantasy game that isn't a total must. I think what we all wanted was a proper RPG from this, but instead it's mostly fighting - and not too clever at that. Personally, I can still get along with Chronicles because it's a beautiful game, with classic FF-style sweet touches. But compared to the best of the series, this is poor.



GRAPHICS

Giant bosses and incredible spell effects but main characters are flat and undeveloped

SOUND

Too much flute going on, but block out the Clannad and the effects are spot on

GAMEPLAY

Single-player is ultimately boring, and the whole thing just gets repetitive with mates

LASTING APPEAL

You'll only go back to play with mates - you won't go near it on your own after a bit

OVERALL SCORE

A fair attempt at a new style of role-player but it's a long way from the usual exemplary quality of Final Fantasy games. Better with friends than alone, too.

68

HOW IT COMPARES: LOST KINGDOMS II, FF CRYSTAL CHRONICLES, B.GATE DARK ALLIANCE II

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Sword Of Mana, Unlimited Saga, Final Fantasy X-2, Ehrgeiz

HARD FACTS

■ 22 blocks per save
■ GBA and link cable needed for every multiplayer player

DID YOU KNOW?

■ This is the first Square Enix RPG on a Nintendo home console (not counting GBA) since Square and Nintendo's BIG falling out nearly ten years back, over switching development of FF VII from N64 to PSone.



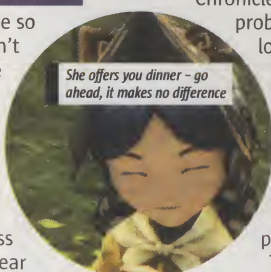
simple to run on a GBA for the multiplayer game, the result is that it's extremely difficult to quickly switch between attack and defend, so you often get a battered through no fault of your own. Very poor.

SOPORIFIC SOLO

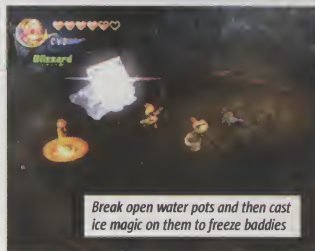
All of this wouldn't be so bad if the game wasn't so repetitive, but the cycle of play is always the same. Plus, while you're given the impression of an entire world to explore, your progress is actually strictly linear as Miasma barriers block your path until you have cleared the required dungeons. Random encounters on the map screen add an element of chance, but these

scuffles aren't as exciting as battles. Instead they are little chats with fellow caravans. Occasionally you can trade items, but generally these scenes are totally pointless.

If you've never played a FF game before, you may find Crystal Chronicles' simplicity less of a problem. It's beautiful to look at, extremely lightweight (so that beginners can get to grips with it easily) and it is fairly challenging. But it's also boring, especially in single-player games. Thankfully the multiplayer option makes the game slightly more exciting, and you and your mates can swap your heroes between each other's games via memory card. You can



She offers you dinner - go ahead, it makes no difference



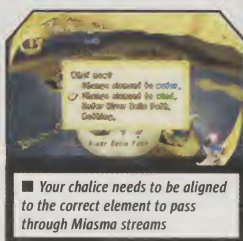
Break open water pots and then cast ice magic on them to freeze baddies

then continue your single-player adventure with multiple players, using the GBA screen to access menus without pausing play. So while Crystal Chronicles isn't terrible, it is disappointing. Given that the Final Fantasy name goes hand-in-hand with epic stories, crazy battles and gigantic quests, we expected so much more. As it is, Crystal Chronicles doesn't even feel like a true Final Fantasy game. So much for the triumphant return. *

WHERE'S YUNA?

It's fair to say that apart from the fuzzy Moogles and recycled spells and monsters, this is barely recognisable on the surface as a Final Fantasy game. Which is a bit sad.

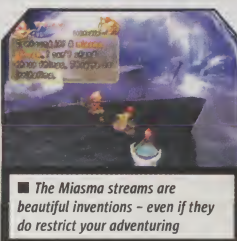
Still, at least there are a few mini-quests to muck about with. Paint your Moogle buddy to reveal secrets, chat to mental locals and play mini-games with your mates.



■ Your chalice needs to be aligned to the correct element to pass through Miasma streams



■ Paint Mog mostly green and you get the Scouter map that reveals info about enemies



■ The Miasma streams are beautiful inventions - even if they do restrict your adventuring

ALIAS

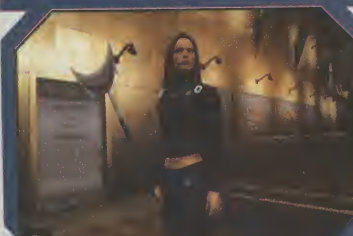
Stealthy undercover action
with TV's sexiest spy

WHO'S THAT GIRL?

Whether she's strutting her lingerie-clad stuff for a gangland boss on his private jet, or playing the role of a docile geisha in Tokyo, Sydney Bristow is always full of surprises. One minute our girl is scanning a corpse in a morgue for traces of DNA, the next she and Marshall are strapped to a nuclear warhead. Never a dull moment.



1 Sydney's first alias is a cocktail waitress in a Monte Carlo casino. Doesn't pay much, but the tips are good



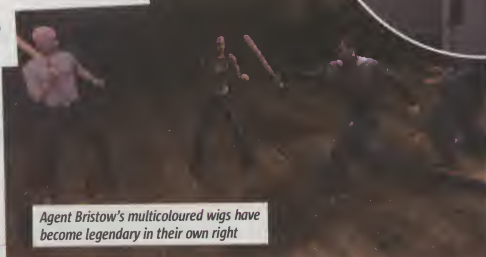
2 In a Saudi museum, Syd's stealth suit enables her to hide in the shadows and play hunt the bone... er



3 Our gal dons a doctor's uniform to fool the guards in this creepy Romanian insane asylum



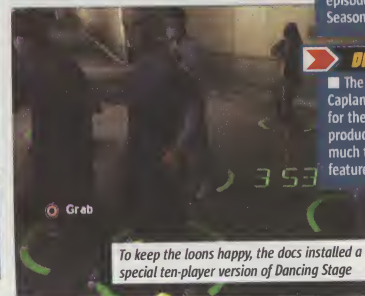
4 In Hong Kong, she's a spandex-clad diplomat's wife, who squeaks when she walks. Not very stealthy then



Agent Bristow's multicoloured wigs have become legendary in their own right

Sydne Bristow kicks ass. She's been tortured in a loony bin, had her teeth ripped out with pliers and her own damned mum tried to blast her brains out – yet she always comes up smelling of roses and looking like a million bucks. Wouldn't want to be her shrink, though.

Anyway, if you've yet to catch the Alias bug, you're missing out on one of the best TV shows since Buffy, and in Jennifer Garner the hottest action babe since, well, Buffy. And now Alias hottie Syd's got her own game too.



To keep the loons happy, the devs installed a special ten-player version of Dancing Stage

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Summer Heat Beach Volleyball
- XGRA: Extreme-G Racing Association
- Turok: Evolution

HARD FACTS

- Over 1200 different moves were mo-capped
- 72 minutes of new music from the show's composer
- Sark's driver in the Casino has the face of show producer Jesse Alexander
- The story is set between episodes 19 and 20 of Alias Season 2

DID YOU KNOW?

- The character of Dr Caplan was created solely for the game, but the TV producers liked him so much they decided to feature him in the show

All weaponry in Alias is disposable, with guns lasting only as long as their ammo clip

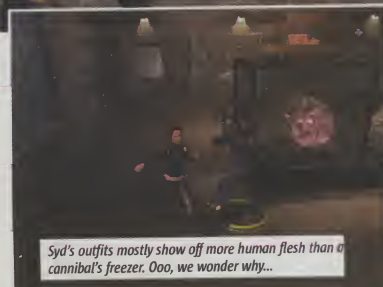
Sydney could show Lara a thing or two when it comes to hanging out

VICIOUS SYD

The game's story takes place after evil secret organisation SD-6 has been exposed and Syd is working full-time for the CIA. Written by official Alias scriptwriters, the plotline and dialogue are every bit as complex, clever and witty as the telly series, with all the main actors enlisted to do the voice acting – even Jennifer Garner herself.

Alias TV show Producers appear to have co-operated with Acclaim to an impressive degree, and fans will love the authentic vibe. Syd certainly wiggles in all the right places and gets to kick butt with the same raw aggression as she does on TV.

In fact, the combat engine is really dead simple to get to grips with and has some pretty neat special moves, including slamming heads into walls as well as stealthy take-downs from behind. There's a lot to love about the game, but it's not all good news. The early missions are too easy and enemy AI should be sharper, though things do improve as the plot thickens.



Syd's outfits mostly show off more human flesh than a cannibal's freezer. Ooo, we wonder why...

MY FIST, YOUR FACE

Emphasis is more on close-quarters combat and stealthy sleuthing over spraying the lead, although you can disarm guards and turn their own weapons against them.

Scenery is very interactive, with Syd able to use almost any object to bash brains in with. The game's also surprisingly non-linear. Mission objectives constantly change and there are usually multiple ways to complete tasks. Syd may not be the next Sam Fisher, but she sure looks a whole lot better in a stealth suit. *



CVG
VERDICT

GRAPHICS

Sydney looks gorgeous, as do the cut-scenes, and the levels look pretty slick too

84

SOUND

Supurb voice-acting from the stars, enhanced by the genius Alias theme tune

88

GAMEPLAY

Much more variety than the usual licensed tripe. Huge missions with lots of sub-quests

79

LASTING APPEAL

Limited. Some unlockable extras would've helped on the replay front

70

As accurate a depiction of a TV show as you're likely to get. The music, stars and gadgets are spot on, and the action's rip-roaring, but it's no threat to Splinter Cell.

OVERALL SCORE

73

HOW IT COMPARES

SPLINTER CELL 2
ALIAS
TOMB RAIDER: ANGEL OF DARKNESS

"SYD KICKS BUTT WITH ALL
THE SAME RAW AGGRESSION
AS SHE DOES ON TV"



Syd's Special Attacks are easy to learn and look pretty spectacular in full flight

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Birmingham. B6 7LB

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april**

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Entrants are selected on a first come, first served basis. You will be required to submit your master league team before the event and specify whether you'll be part of the North or South areas of the challenge depending on where you live. Entrants will be notified by either post or email before the event if they have qualified. See www.pesleague.co.uk for full terms and conditions.



RELEASE DATE

18 MAR

GAME INFO

COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: NINTENDO
* DEV: SQUARE ENIX
* WWW.SQUARE-ENIX-USA.COM/GAMES/SOM/
* CONTACT: 08706 060247

EXTRAS

* CABLE LINK-UP TO TRADE DATA THAT INCREASES SPECIAL AMIGO ATTACKS

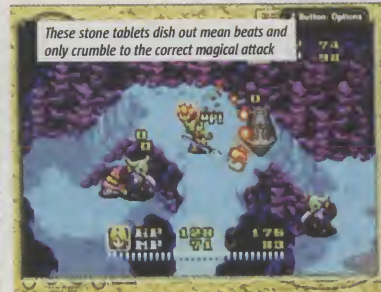


Different people and events are available at different times of day, like evening here

Use the cogs and gears to explore the clock tower area



Ah, the old trick treasure chest. These only respond to physical attacks with your fists



These stone tablets dish out mean beats and only crumble to the correct magical attack

SWORD OF MANA

Monsters, Mana and a Mama-load of adventure all on your teeny GBA

O imagine Pro Evo but viewed top-down and with wee blobs representing the players. Or how about Mario Sunshine but restricted to a side-on only viewpoint and paper-thin enemies.

Frighteningly, this is how games used to be. Sword Of Mana harks back to ye olde gaming days of yore with 'classic' or 'bog-standard' (delete according to your viewpoint) RPG gameplay.

BUT WAIT, IT'S GREAT

The thing is, despite being as clichéd and familiar an adventure as you could ever find, Sword Of Mana still manages to be wicked cool to play. The game's battles are fought in real-time, meaning there are no

surprise turn-based interruptions when exploring the vast landscapes. You can steam through the action at a pace so quick you'll probably get blisters on your butt-cheeks.

The quests too are just long enough to keep you interested, and never drag. Levelling up and forging new weapons and armour is dead easy, and you'll find you've usually always got enough cash and materials to boost your skills and abilities.

So Sword Of Mana is great if you like your action by the ton, fun and at a pace like lightening. But this simplicity causes some problems, especially if you're used to the frontal lobe-fragging complexity of more sophisticated role-players.

LEMON SQUEEZY

For instance, it only very rarely matters if you use the correct magic or attack-type against enemies. You'll also level up every ten minutes or so, letting you become a supreme powerhouse of adventuring just that little bit too quickly.

PREVIOUS GAMES

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, Unlimited Saga, Final Fantasy X-2, X, IX, VIII, VII... etc. etc.

HARD FACTS

■ 25 hours-plus gameplay
■ Two only slightly different plots
■ Seven NPC allies join you

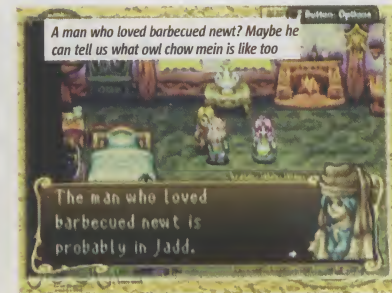
DID YOU KNOW?

■ Mana fans beware. It's a remake of slightly whiffy Final Fantasy Adventure on GB and not a sequel to the much-loved SNES role-player 'Secret Of Mana'



Plus your computer-controlled allies have some of the worst AI in gaming history and get stuck on just about any piece of scenery. And as for the boss fights, forget any idea of Zelda-style attack strategy and just pummel away as fast as possible, while healing from time to time. All a bit remedial.

Despite that, it still manages to be fun. What's difficult to discount is the sense of satisfaction gained from solving a puzzle or clearing a dungeon. The ease of play means many of the traditional RPG niggles don't crop up, making this a streamlined adventure that is much easier than almost any other RPG to swallow. *



A man who loved barbecued newt? Maybe he can tell us what owl chow mein is like too

The man who loved barbecued newt is probably in Jadd.

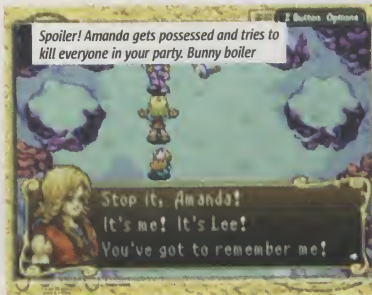
"STEAM THROUGH THE ACTION
AT A PACE SO QUICK YOU'LL
GET BLISTERS ON YOUR BUTT-CHEEKS!"



Fights are mostly about twatting the A button - here making Amanda lash out with her lance



Lord Devius' mansion is full of lackeys that have been magically turned into birds



Spoiler! Amanda gets possessed and tries to kill everyone in your party. Bunny boiler

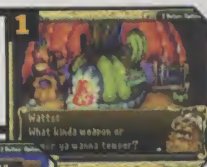
Stop it, Amanda!
It's me! It's Lee!
You've got to remember me!

THE CRAZY STUFF

Don't like stats screens and levelling up? Then go play snap with your idiot baby sister.

This is RPG-ville and Sword Of Mana is about as traditional as you can get in terms of enhancing your hero's skills. There's a whole bunch of other crazy role-playing nonsense to fiddle about with too, though. But best of all it's dead easy to get your noodle around.

■ Rescue Watts and he'll temper your weapons and armour with the goodies you find like fruit. Mental!



Item	Value
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Bow	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1
Darkish Wood	1

■ Boring screen yes, but look! Forging your weapons has a MAJOR positive effect on individual stats. Do it!

■ Feed this talking tree with seeds you find to create weird mutations for powering up your weapons



■ When the 'Level up' command appears on your command ring, you know it's time to upgrade yer skills



GRAPHICS

Backgrounds and monsters look tasty, but menu and stats screens seem old-fashioned

SOUND

Not a patch on Golden Sun, but explosions are meaty enough through headphones

GAMEPLAY

Little strategy to the fights but it's dead addictive and quests are perfectly balanced

LASTING APPEAL

It's big but easier than many RPGs, so you make satisfying progress with each play

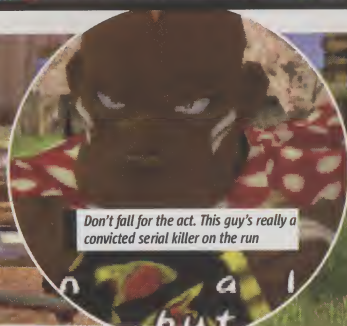
The most unsophisticated RPG from Square Enix in years. Its simplicity makes it ideal for RPG newbies but it's also strangely compelling for pros too.

OVERALL SCORE

81

HOW IT COMPARES

GOLDEN SUN
SWORD OF MANA
BREATH OF FIRE



Hug your cow. Love your cow. If you do, your cow will love you back. It's a wonderful life



HARVEST MOON A WONDERFUL LIFE

A tedious cow-hugging, sheep-shaving snore-a-thon best left for masochists

CHORES IN PORTABLE

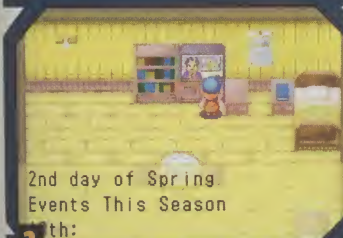
If a virtual life of hard graft sounds good to you (freak!), get your hands on Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town for the GBA.

It's based in a different town with new characters, but it's near enough the same playing experience in 2D. It can also link with A Wonderful Life and allows villagers to travel between the two games. Neat.



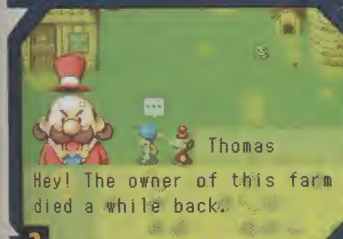
1

Friends Of Mineral Town has a huge landscape for you to explore - if you're not sheep-shaving



2

There's about 30 real seconds to the in-game hour, giving you barely enough time to get everything done



3

Alright, mate. No need to get all shirty about it. Sheesh. If he's dead, can I have the farm?



4

When you've got the cash, this dude will sort you out with the crib of kings. Or you could nip to Ikea



hat the hell's all this about? You hug cows, raise a chicken coup and shave

sheep before chilling in the local bar with townsfolk? Sounds about as much fun as Sim Emmerdale to us.

That's not far off either, but Harvest Moon is at least slightly less idiotic. You've inherited a farm from your father, and you have to develop it into a thriving business. Harvest Moon looks like a wussy kids' title but it's actually a money-driven game of cunning trade and frigg' hard work. A bit like Theme Park World, but without the funfair rides. Or any of the fun.

A DEPRESSING LIFE

There's so much work to do. You've got to dig and water fields, buy and plant seeds to grow crops, buy food and feed all the animals, wash 'em, milk the cows twice a day - and that's just the basics. You've also got to hug the animals now and again to keep their spirits up, and even cook for

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Harvest Moon (PSone), HM: Back to Nature (PSone), HM 2 (GBC), Harvest Moon: Friends of Mineral Town (GBA)

HARD FACTS

- A total of 40 unique characters to meet
- 6 main chapters lasting up to 30 game-years
- Get married and have a rug-rat

DID YOU KNOW?

- Natsume are releasing another version of A Wonderful Life and Friends Of Mineral Town in which you play as a girl. Maybe it'll be Mandy Dingle, but we won't know until E3



yourself or else your on-screen farming idiot won't work.

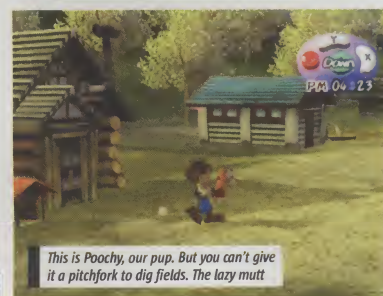
Consequently progress is slow, particularly at the start. Three hours in, we'd planted some seeds and bought a chicken called KFC. Six hours in, all seemed well until we forgot to water the crops. They died. We were hammered. No food, no money, and one hungry chicken. It took AGES to get the ball rolling again. And the farm isn't your only concern.

IZ YOU DA FOX?

Your life on the farm is split into six chapters, each marking a major event. One of them is marriage. You have the task of wooing one of the local beauties. It's not just a matter of selecting 'Yes' on a 'Marry

this one?' prompt screen. You'll have to turn on the charm - pay her regular visits and give her free milk. The white stuff always does the trick.

You can hire characters called Sprites to help you out with the work, but that doesn't make the game more fun. It's just



too damned detailed. There are rewards later on once your farm is built up and you're raking in the dollars, but you'll probably want to burn your crops and claim on the insurance long before that. *



GRAPHICS

A functional but brightly coloured environment with only adequate detail

75

SOUND

Quirky, and tranquil melodies. The text-scrolling sound is annoying, though

71

GAMEPLAY

Could last you all year if you can be arsed. But you really shouldn't be

86

LASTING APPEAL

Slow, repetitive and unexciting - just like farmers and working on a farm, in fact. Bah

54

Harvest Moon will swallow huge chunks of time out of your life and reward you minimally. If you're anything like us, you'll let the animals starve.

OVERALL SCORE

58

HOW IT COMPARES

THE SIMS: DUSTIN' OUT
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
THEME PARK WORLD

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AND LOAD UP ON INFO!

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RELEASE DATE
24 MARCH

GAME INFO
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-8

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: SONY
* DEV: SONY LONDON STUDIO
* WWW.PLAYSTATION.COM
* CONTACT: 0207 859 5000

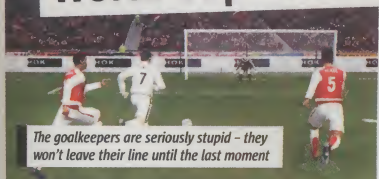
ONLINE GAMING
* 1-8 PLAYERS
* ONLINE LEAGUES
* AND CHALLENGES

EXTRAS
* MULTITAP
* BROADBAND
* ADAPTER

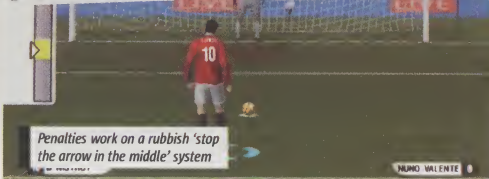
TIF

THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004™

If this is football,
then Scotland will win the
World Cup. Not happening



The goalkeepers are seriously stupid - they won't leave their line until the last moment



Penalties work on a rubbish 'stop the arrow in the middle' system



Because player likenesses are mapped on they all look like they've had bad facelifts

FREE ROAMING CAMERA

SELECT X A Y L
CAMERA -ZOOM +ZOOM SWIVEL ROAM

In the challenge mode your performance is assessed online and there's prizes up for grabs

Aberdeen versus Al-Ain United. Not exactly a fixture made in footie heaven, but This Is Football has such a huge selection of teams we couldn't resist matching up Scotland's Premier Division cellar-dwellers with the cream of Arabian football.

Kick-off. We're controlling Aberdeen's Scott Booth, pushing forward into Al-Ain territory. Hold on, those defenders aren't tackling us. He's in the box - still no challenge. We press Square and it's in the back of the net.

SING WHEN YOU'RE MINGING

Not good. Aberdeen scoring at all is pretty unrealistic, but scoring with such ease is

SCHOOLBOY ERROR

We've got to hand it to TIF 2004 for having some of the weirdest licensing ever seen in a football game. Arsenal are called Highbury and Van Nistelrooy is called D Nistroy, but at least there are ten real-life school teams from England to play as. There's even a greasy mudsick of a school pitch to play on and a lovely grey building for that true Grange Hill experience. You don't get that in Pro Evo, do you?



1 If you go to any of these schools send us proof and you might win some assorted tat. Now there's an offer



2 The glamour, the passion, the muddy playing field behind the biology lab... It's what football's about

3 You can put yourself in the game - look, there's me scoring a scorcher. This is just like real life!



4 But at the end of the day we'd rather do maths homework in detention than play as a school team

just stupid. Was it a freak? No, because we did it again. Then we did it against Man United. Then we did it against Brazil. So we bumped up the difficulty level, which helped but only because our opponents kept running away from us.

It gets worse. This Is Football is uglier than the Arsenal away strip. Not only do the players run like they're absolutely BURSTING for a piss, the likenesses are non-league. It's as if the development team said, "Make that guy, whatsisface that's married to Posh Spice, make him recognisable. Don't worry about the rest."

RELEGATED

And, yes, it gets even worse. There's a delay between the controls and your player's reaction. There's no on-screen pitch radar, so crafting attacks is frustratingly random. Shots have about as much punch as your gran, the ball physics blows goats, and almost any mis-timed tackle will win you a booking.

PREVIOUS GAMES

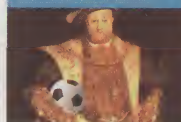
■ This Is Football 2003, EyeToy, Hardware: Online Arena, The Getaway

HARD FACTS

■ Over 18,000 players
■ 650 club teams from 24 nations
■ 147 international teams
■ 22 real and fantasy stadiums

DID YOU KNOW?

■ In between marrying ladies and chopping their heads off, royal fatty Henry VIII liked a bit of footie. A list of his possessions shows he owned a pair of studded football boots!



Nice studs-up tackle there. And check the height on that dive!

"SHOTS HAVE ABOUT AS MUCH PUNCH
AS YOUR GRAN AND THE BALL
PHYSICS BLOWS GOATS"



FREE ROAMING CAMERA

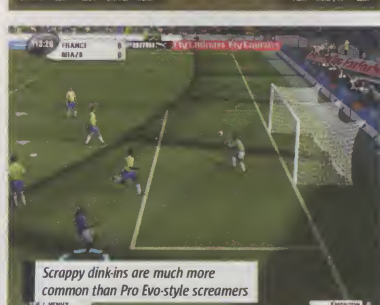
It's like watching crazy robot football players from the 1920s - all stiff backs and mad, unblinking eyes

PLAY RWD / FF EXIT

So it's got online modes. So what? This sucks in one-player, so there's no way we'd want to share our misery with others. And the career mode is a joke, starting you off playing as a school team playing in a school league. Crap.

This Is Football is surprisingly bad. Surprising because it's developed in Sony's reputable London Studios. The one good thing we can say is that it made us realise how much we take Pro Evo for granted. We're going to buy it flowers and treat it to an expensive dinner, 'cos we could never replace it with toss like this. *

Tip for goalies - when the ball is about to cross the line don't stand with your hands on your hips



Scrappy dink-ins are much more common than Pro Evo-style screamers



GRAEME

CVG VERDICT

54

GRAPHICS

Players move like rusty robots with arthritis but the stadiums are quite nice

43

SOUND

Crackly crowd howls and commentary that sounds like it was recorded in a tin hut

34

GAMEPLAY

Can't compete with Sensible Soccer, let alone Pro Evo. This is unbelievably poor

39

LASTING APPEAL

Gets painful long before extra time. Even the career mode won't hold your interest

36

OVERALL SCORE

A bad instalment in a series that has never been this duff. Forget the Premier League, this wouldn't even make the Conference. This is NOT football.

36

HOW IT COMPARES

PRO EVO 3
THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004
FIFA 2004



RELEASE DATE

OUT NOW

GAME INFO

COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: WANADOO
* DEV: ASYLUM ENTERTAINMENT
* WWW.ASYLUM-ENTERTAINMENT.COM/CURSE
* CONTACT: 0033 158885000

The environments look suitably authentic but the characters are a bit too silly for our tastes

We're praying all he's doing is admiring those knocked over pots back there

We're not convinced they had flamethrowers back then, but at least you get to set fire to stuff

It looks like a rampant fart and has pretty much the same effect if you get too close

CURSE OF THE EYE OF ISIS

Even guns, gore and an ancient curse can't make history any more exciting

We thought we'd stared true evil right in the face when we strolled into the CVG toilets after kebab night. Turns out though, there's a strange yellow mist and ungodly stench of decay even worse than Lee's shish fallout – and it's turning people into dribbling, flesh-eating zombies in a blaze of Egyptian vengeance.

If there's one thing we've learned from cheesy B-movie horror flicks, it's that looting ancient Egyptian tombs is going to rain curses down faster than a greased-up cheetah in a Nissan Skyline. So imagine how smug we felt guiding Darien Dane, fine upstanding Victorian gentleman, and his buxom wench, Victoria Sutton, on their quest to retrieve the missing Eye of Isis

Loot the dead for ammo – just watch they don't bite your face off while you're doing it

statue from the Museum of Great Britain, in order to end the zombie-spawning menace.

The Dickensian duo fanny across five exotic locations during their search, mowing down the re-animated dead with a selection of antiquated weapons, from pistols to ye olde flame-throwers. Contact with the misty manifestation of rampaging evil fills your Curse Meter – the higher it gets, the sooner your impending doom.

OUT OF THE SPHINX-STER

Loitering somewhere between action adventure and survival horror, Curse doesn't really succeed at being either. The action and adventure elements are generally humdrum and we've seen more horror in our laundry baskets after a fortnight.

Part of the problem lies with the plot, which is just too hokey and clichéd to be involving. The graphics do a good job of bringing the quaint old Victorian locations to life, but the odd cartoon style adopted for the main characters and monsters,

PREVIOUS GAMES

Galidor, Rescue Heroes, Molten Menace, Sabrina

HARD FACTS

■ Five Victorian locations to explore – the Museum of Great Britain, sewers, train station, steamship and Egypt
■ Seven weapons to crush the onslaught – shotgun, rifle, pistol, truncheon, crossbow, flame-thrower and mortar gun

DID YOU KNOW?

■ The developers spent a good chunk of time studying ancient Egyptian and Victorian architecture to give the game that touch of extra authenticity

If the scenery was more interactive we went some rage on the priceless antiques next

along with some ridiculously unconvincing animations, pretty much destroy any pant-browning potential.

Furthermore, the dodgy 3D control system and constantly changing camera angles ensure you'll be hurtling off in the wrong direction more times than you'd like – usually straight into the festering arms of a bunch of comedy zombies.

Okay, so there's nothing hellishly wrong with Curse, but with so many better action and survival horror games queuing to put the willies up your Xbox,

it's cursed for being just too damned average an excursion to be worth your time. Eye of Isis? Arse of Isis, more like. *

Keep still and your shots will do more damage – mind the ancient halitosis breath though

You'll play Victoria at certain points – alas, huge norks and mini-skirts weren't the rage back then

The visual styling of the key characters and monsters hardly helps pile on the horror

ANTIQUE ATROCITIES

Occasionally, Curse slinks out of the quagmire of averageness to impress with a few good set-pieces.

Most of these involve crafty curse re-animation or otherwise abusing the long dead exhibits on display around the museum. One of our favourite moments happens amongst the ferocious Wildlife Collection and puts you on the receiving end of some very sharp teeth. Mummy!

■ The horror to come is sneakily foreshadowed when you enter the collection for the first time. Yikes!

1

2

■ While you're busy shifting furniture around for fun, the curse seizes the opportunity to strike

3

■ For some reason, the re-animated undead are never happy to see you – shame the bear looks more daft than demonic

4

■ Unlike the other shambling monstrosities in the game, these critters require some cunning to take down

MATT W

CVG
VERDICT

GRAPHICS

Nicely detailed environments but the 'comedy' characters spoil the scares

71

SOUND

Decent voices but the effects and music are sparse to the point of non-existence

63

GAMEPLAY

This kind of thing's been done much better before – average on every count

62

LASTING APPEAL

Even if you can be bothered to play through once, you won't be back for more

56

Like putting a jigsaw together during a typhoon, all the right bits are there but it never really comes together for long enough to be more than bland mush.

* OVERALL SCORE

58

HOW IT COMPARES

DINO CRISIS 3
CURSE
SILENT HILL 3



RELEASE DATE

MAR 26

GAME INFO

COST: £34.99
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: THQ
* DEV: RAINBOW STUDIOS
* WWW.THQ.CO.UK/MX/
* CONTACT: 01483 767656

PS2

MX UNLEASHED

Unleashed, unsurprising,
underwhelming



Racing monster trucks can be a dangerous business as demonstrated here



This rider clearly forgot to bring a bike. Make like Superman instead



Use the 'action camera' to snazz up races - but you'll probably crash



Leap huge houses in special jumping games if you get bored in the main game



Cue the mandatory smart bomb attack. Pump up enough special juice from nailing combos then hit a single button to unleash. Taxing, huh!

Some people don't like pure speed-based racers. They think it sucks in the face of 'real' danger. They want high-flying mental stuff across bumpy ground. They want to get cracked across the head by a flying back wheel. They want games like MX Unleashed.

Admittedly, Rainbow Studio's motocross game knows its physics. Its terrain is so rickety you get a sore arse just from watching it. Bikes bounce and leap like kangaroos with a worm problem. No surprises then that squealing over the finish line has little to do with learning courses and negotiating tricky bends. It's all about timing, being able to project yourself off humps, manoeuvring your rider mid-air and learning how to shift your weight so that you don't end up petering along like a

toddler on a pedal bike. It's hardcore, neck-breaking stuff, and nothing like a summer's cruise in a Ferrari round Gotham's real-world courses. Unfortunately though, most of MX Unleashed has been done before. It handles well and there are some cool freestyle events (from insane stunts to racing against planes!), but hell, we were playing games like this yonks ago. It's neatly programmed and everything, but totally unremarkable. *



STEPHEN
CVG
VERDICT

Probably the best of its type with sweet physics and a decent career racing mode. But hey... so what?! Seen it all before. This really is for bike nuts only.

OVERALL SCORE

65

HOW IT COMPARES

ATV OFF 2
MX UNLEASHED
MX SUPERFURY



RELEASE DATE

MAR 26

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: UBISOFT * DEV: SNOWBLIND STUDIOS
* WWW.CHAMPIONSOFNORRATH.COM
* 01932 838 230

ONLINE GAMING

* 2-4 PLAYERS CO-OPERATIVE STORY
MODE (WITH VOICE CHAT)

EXTENS

* USB HEADSET
* MULTITAP
* DSL ADAPTER

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH REALMS OF EVERQUEST

Goblins are everywhere. Slicing fun for brutal beardy bods

Thousands of 'em. And it's all because of Lord Of The Bloody Rings. Great movie and all that but please, STOP! No? Okay then...

This is yet another action-based hack 'em up for those hungry for Baldur's Gate-style thrills. It's standard stuff - hammer buttons to skewer goblins, then try to get it on with the virtual barmaid because - let's face it - you're a loser in real life.

But while Champions Of Norrath is typical beardy fantasy guff, it's done

surprisingly well. Whip your champion warrior into action in a series of explore-and-fetch missions, then save the world.

Gameplay-wise, the slicing is intense and tactical. Blocking is just as important as dishing the beats, and depending on your choice of race, you can crack craniums using magic or, from afar, with long-range bows.

There's the usual stat-building RPG element to play around with, which makes the whole experience much more

rewarding, plus it offers solid off- and online adventuring for up to four gamers, and the visuals are peachier than Kylie's buttocks. It's quietly recommended then,

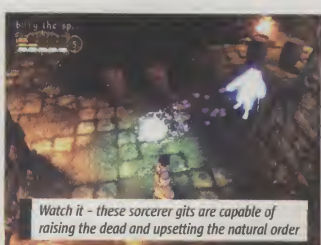
providing you're not already sick of anything involving swords, orcs and stupid bloody character names. *



Set the ladies on fire with your sweet-talking and magic spells



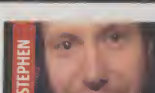
Slain goblins decorate your humble abode, as seen on Changing Rooms



Watch it - these sorcerer gits are capable of raising the dead and upsetting the natural order



So much blood, you'd swear this was State Of Emergency, only with better gameplay



STEPHEN
CVG
VERDICT

A good, compelling hacker set in the EverQuest world. Sure it's uncool, but it's worth a punt if you enjoyed Baldur's Gate and are desperate for online play.

OVERALL SCORE

80

HOW IT COMPARES

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE II
CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH
HUNTER: THE RECKONING REDEEMER

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ISSUE 140 APRIL 2004 £5.99

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COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04

PAINKILLER



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EXCLUSIVE!

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RELEASE DATE

26 MAR

GAME INFO

COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO

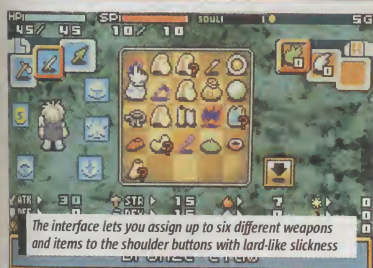
* PUB: THQ
* DEV: SEGA
* WWW.ATLUS.COM/SS2.HTM
* CONTACT: 01483 767656GAME BOY
ADVANCE

SHINING SOUL II

More of a shiny turd than a twinkling gem



The queen reassures you that her daughter will be just fine - so why the hell are we fannying about trying to save her?



The interface lets you assign up to six different weapons and items to the shoulder buttons with lard-like slickness

We love nothing better than an evening in with a rumpled copy of Buxom Amazon Babes clutched in our trembling fists, but there'll always be a few of the hardcore who'd rather struggle to the finish line with Frumpy Housewives In Spandex.



You'll be gnawing your own thumbs off once you've been killed by obscured bloody monsters for the dozzenth fekkinn' time

The Shining Soul series panders to our more mainstream tastes by ditching all the brain-straining RPG stat-crunching and random battle shenanigans for a much pacier real-time arcade experience.

Features include new character classes to sauce up the gameplay variety, as well as attempting to redeem the original's tedious dungeon-crawling action with a more complex and involving storyline. There are also more weapons and other items to discover as you explore.



Real-time combat's alright but most enemies are so dense you'll thrash them with no trouble

Despite these additions, the game still suffers from basic hack and slash gameplay. The only real skill required is the ability to mash the attack button faster than an epileptic woodpecker - provided you can actually see the approaching onslaught behind the all-too-frequently obscuring scenery.

The multiplayer mode lets you bash through the main quest with a few mates and throws in a couple of mode-specific scenarios for an added laugh, but ultimately Shining Soul II is a distinctly non-shiny and soulless experience. *

MATT **CVG VERDICT**

Only worth a look in if you're gagging for some multiplayer finger action - and even then, *Zelda's Four Swords* is a much more satisfying option.

OVERALL SCORE

61

HOW IT COMPARES GOLDEN SUN 2
SWORD OF MANA
SHINING SOUL 2



RELEASE DATE

26 MAR

GAME INFO

COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-8

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: KOEI
* DEV: KOEI
* WWW.KOEI.COM
* CONTACT: 01462 476130

PS2

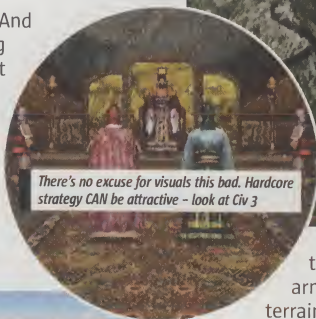
ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS VIII

Love Chinese history and number crunching?
Get romantic with this little baby

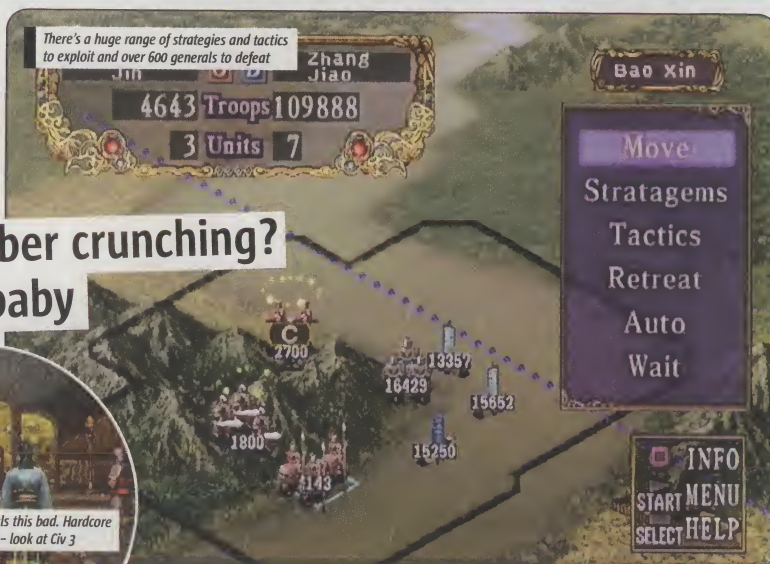
We went to school. We know history sucks sweaty arse. So when Romance Of The Three Kingdoms VIII's intro movie opened with "KOEI presents from its historical simulation series..." we were that close to grabbing the disc, lobbing it out the window, and then running downstairs to hit the shattered remains with big sticks.

But then we saw lots of swords and armies and mean Chinese guys chopping each other up! Who'd have thought history was full of senseless violence?

So we soldiered on. And then we hit a wall. A big ugly wall covered in text menus. It might be confusing, but this is PS2's purest strategy title. Gameplay switches between menu-based resource management and old-skool strategy. You take



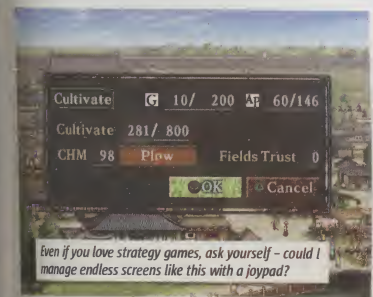
There's no excuse for visuals this bad. Hardcore strategy CAN be attractive - look at Civ 3



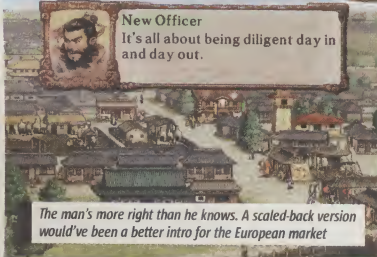
There's a huge range of strategies and tactics to exploit and over 600 generals to defeat

turns moving your wee armies round a map, using terrain and tactics to your advantage. Get into a ruck and it's played out with a crappy little animation with your victory or defeat displayed in cold, hard numbers.

Yup, numbers. Numbers equal maths. History plus maths equals brain spasms. The awful presentation, shite interface and alienating complexity drag down Romance's appeal (and score), but if you're hardcore enough you won't find a more engrossing strategy game on PS2. *



Even if you love strategy games, ask yourself - could I manage endless screens like this with a joypad?



New Officer
It's all about being diligent day in and day out.

The man's more right than he knows. A scaled-back version would've been a better intro for the European market

GRAEME **CVG VERDICT**

If you like rubbing sandpaper against your brain, this has all the strategic chaffage you need. Everyone else should avoid it like a Chinese burn.

OVERALL SCORE

62

HOW IT COMPARES ADVANCE WARS 2
ROTK II
DYNASTY TACTICS 2



RELEASE DATE
12 MARCH

GAME INFO
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: SONY
* DEV: SCEJ
* WWW.FORBIDDEN-SIREN.COM
* CONTACT: 020 7859 5000

FORBIDDEN SIREN

Will turn you into a bloodthirsty zombie - guaranteed

We wanted this to be good so badly it hurt. At a glance, Forbidden Siren promised to challenge Silent Hill for realism and spooky atmosphere while pushing the gore factor close to Manhunt.

We also had the classic golden carrot called innovation dangled before our nose. All of the above has, in fact, been expertly delivered. Sadly, all that's missing is an enjoyable game.

NOT READY AND NOT WILLING

It's present day, so the game's characters are the sort you might find in a contemporary Japanese TV drama. Altogether you control ten unwilling

WATCHIN' ZOMBIE TV

Forbidden Siren's most notable innovation is sight-jacking - your ability to see through the eyes of the evil freaks hunting you down.

Up to four zombie-eye-views are stored as channels on your controller and you check they're distracted before making your next move. It works okay, but figuring out where the viewer is standing can sometimes drive you nuts!

1 Sometimes the guy whose head you've borrowed starts laughing and talking to himself like CVG's Lee

2 Zombie vision is pretty foggy. Blue and green lights represent the heroes. If they're in view, they're in danger

3 Wait until the zombies are occupied, reloading a weapon for example, before making your next play

4 It's crucial to learn the surroundings so you know from where the enemy is viewing. This can be frustrating

heroes, among them a teacher, some grumpy old bloke, a flapping fashion victim of a girl, and a few high school students who act cool even while dying.

A small Japanese village has transformed into hell on earth, and everyone turned into bloodthirsty mutants. You must combine the efforts of a disparate group in order to give Satan the finger and be home in time to watch Hit Parade.

IF I COULD JUST...AARGH!

The game breaks down into 78 scenarios, with two mission objectives spanning three days. Locations are often shared, although at different times and with unique missions to each character. One may be required to escape from a village, whereas another must locate a specific object from that same village. A door that is locked for one person may be open for the purposes of another. Gradually the successes of all characters enable progression through the story.

Your problems start from the off with poor controls. Apart from the clever sight-

Two shots and you're dead - often before you know where the shots are coming from!

Little Harumi is depending on you to get her out of school alive... it's double maths next!

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Devil Dice
- Space Fisherman
- Poinie's Poin
- Pipo Saru 2001

HARD FACTS

- Successful shots that equal death = two
- Total number of missions = 156
- Days CVG took to play five game hours = seven

DID YOU KNOW?

- Despite being a bit weak in our opinion, Forbidden Siren is apparently influenced by classy H.P. Lovecraft novels along the lines of Call Of Cthulhu

jack ability (see Zombie TV box), the interaction is ropey at best. Walking and running is okay, but all other actions are clumsy. Merely picking up an object or opening a door is a chore, but when it comes to defending yourself with a weapon you're so feeble, inaccurate and slow compared to the enemy that you just want to give up.

Add to this the repetitive nature of the game, requiring you to replay entire stages for something completely minor and you've got one of the most frustrating, idiotic gameplay experiences ever created. *

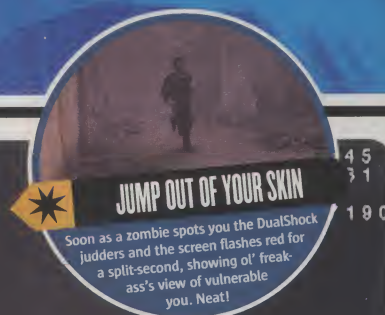
It takes ages to aim and fire. Meanwhile, the stupid zombie seems to have laser targeting!

X 1199.26
Y 3471.87
Z 269.09
R 1.6767

X 1293.70
Y 462.11
Z 10.00
R 1.8253

Usually the girl characters are much weaker, so require lifting up onto higher ledges. Bless

Objectives for each mission are very specific. You clearly need extra ammo in this one



"YOU'RE SO FEEBLE, INACCURATE AND SLOW COMPARED TO ENEMIES, YOU JUST WANNA GIVE UP"

We get the idea this guy is supposed to be cool, but his voice makes him sound idiotic

An archive of various, interesting but usually unnecessary artifacts is collected over time

Archive



Hanuda Community Newsletter
July 2003 edition

On July 3rd, the Hanuda Brewer's Association held the 33rd "Hanuda Sake Testing Contest" at the Hanuda Community Centre. Police officer, Tetsuo Ishida won the contest.



GRAPHICS

Loaded with mood-setting effects such as fog and rain, everything looks highly realistic

SOUND

Eerie background noises and haunting music grips you. Shame about the dire voice acting

GAMEPLAY

We like that they tried new stuff with the interface but it's just way too long winded

LASTING APPEAL

It'll take about a month of standard playtime to get through. No reason to go back after

Ambitiously produced but fundamentally flawed attempt at survival horror that has the capacity to destroy a grown man's will to live. Trust us, we know.

OVERALL SCORE

54

HOW IT COMPARES

SILENT HILL 3
FORBIDDEN SIREN
RES EVIL CODE VERONICA



RELEASE DATE
19 MARCH

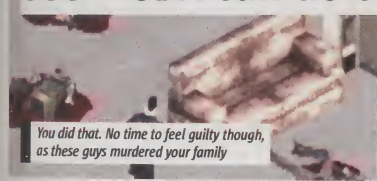
GAME INFO
COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: ROCKSTAR GAMES
* DEV: MOBIUS
* WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/MAXPAYNE/GBA
* CONTACT: 01753 496 600

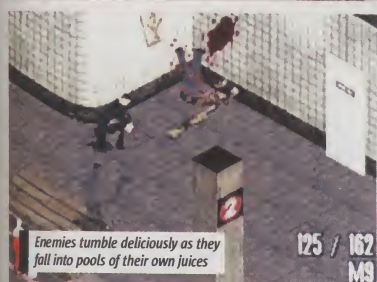
GAME BOY ADVANCE

MAX PAYNE

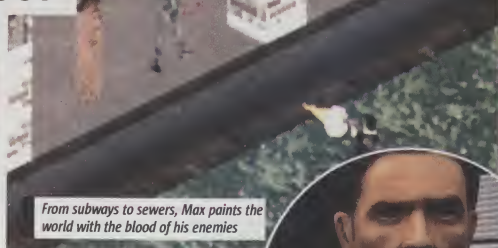
Blood, guts 'n' cruel revenge.
See - GBA can do cool



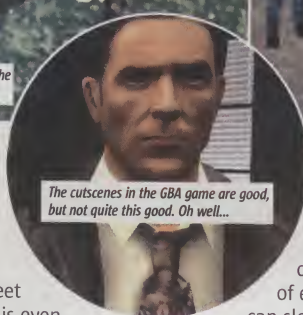
You did that. No time to feel guilty though, as these guys murdered your family



Enemies tumble deliciously as they fall into pools of their own juices



From subways to sewers, Max paints the world with the blood of his enemies



The cutscenes in the GBA game are good, but not quite this good. Oh well...

unleashed a fresh batch of bullets into another foe, claret drenching the walls and ceiling. This is why Max Payne rocks, no matter what format he's exacting his sweet revenge on. Amazingly, this is even true of the handheld remake of the first instalment in the Max saga. Despite being viewed top-down, this IS Max Payne, right down to the last spent bullet and blood splatter. Even the spoken *noir* narrative has made it into the game, along with the vicious shoot-outs, simple puzzles and condensed but intense playing time.



WE NEED A 'HELP MAN' THERE A PRISONER IN THE CONTROL ROOM IF WE CAN GET THERE AND GET IN

117 / 162

The graphic novel style was ditched for the second game, but we prefer it

You round a corner, draw your gun and leap in glorious slow motion, letting fly with a spray of searing hot lead.

Your enemy's face explodes in a shower of blood and bone. Before your ass even hits the deck you've turned in the air and

Gameplay is simple and often involves nothing more than clearing room after room of enemy goons, but you can slow down time to give you the edge. Using Bullet Time and Shoot-dodge moves to turn time into treacle works well on GBA, even if you can't always see the bullets heading in your direction. The whole game is an intense, adult-themed action hit that really shouldn't be missed, even if it is over too damned quick. *

CVG VERDICT

A stunning achievement on GBA and a frickin' brilliant game too. It's everything Max Payne should be: gritty, violent, and so much fun it should be illegal.

OVERALL SCORE

89

HOW IT COMPARES

LOTR: ROTK
MAX PAYNE
TOMB RAIDER: THE PROPHECY

★REVIEWS ROUND-UP

WE COULDN'T RAM ALL OUR REVIEWS IN THE REST OF THE MAG, SO COME ON FATTY, TREAT YOURSELF AN EXTRA HELPING. BURP...



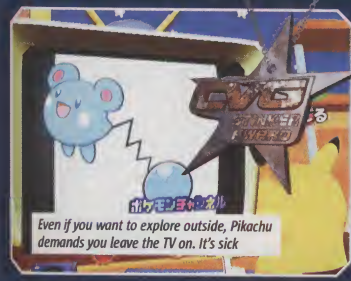
SILENT SCOPE COMPLETE

* OUT: MARCH 12 * COST: £39.99 * PLAYERS: 1

You can't shoot blarney butt crack Colin Farrell in a phonebox, but you will still have fun with this lightgun snipe 'em up.

You get four Silent Scope games, though they all play identically and are about as basic as a round of snap - with added terrorists and grenades.

56



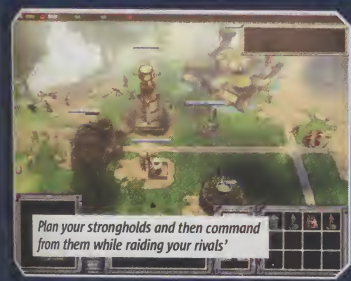
POKÉMON CHANNEL

* OUT: APRIL 9 * COST: £39.99 * PLAYERS: 1

Look after a virtual Pikachu... by forcing him to watch TV. It's not the most humane way to raise a pet and makes for a pretty horrible gaming experience too.

Only the very youngest kids will get any sort of fun from this point-and-click 'adventure'. It's shameful for Cube owners.

37



SAVAGE

* OUT: NOW * COST: £29.99 * PLAYERS: 64

Online adventuring that pitches humans against terrible beast-men. It mixes real-time strategy with first-person action in ways too clever to go into in such a small review.

Just know that it's a decent adventure, and is ideal for strategy freaks.

72



HYPER STREET FIGHTER II

* OUT: APRIL 20 * COST: £19.99 * PLAYERS: 1-2

The ultimate version of Street Fighter II if you're a hardcore fan.

The game mixes characters' different forms from the Championship Edition, Turbo, Super and Super Turbo games. You also get a copy of the free Manga Street Fighter movie.

69



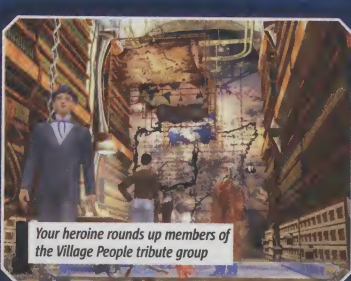
DANCING STAGE UNLEASHED

* OUT: NOW * COST: £39.99 * PLAYERS: 1-4

Crazy dance mat action finally arrives on Xbox, with a new four-player mode and online functions like downloading new songs and uploading scores.

It's the same old Dancing Stage underneath of course, but it's still damn good fun for party gaming.

70



JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

* OUT: NOW * COST: £29.99 * PLAYERS: 1

A modern-day retelling of the Jules Verne adventure, with a wearily feisty female reporter caught up in the story of trekking to the Earth's core.

Guide her around using a very old-fashioned point-and-click interface. Adequate, but there's little to distinguish this.

62

IMPORT REVIEWS

★ FULLY INDEPENDENT & MULTI-FORMAT ★ TRUST NO-ONE ELSE

SWORDS, SUPERPOWERS PLUS A SHOOT 'EM UP WONDER!



Welcome to the all-new Import Reviews section – CVG's window on a thrilling

parallel world of games.

Although release dates are now closer worldwide, some great games are released in Japan or the US far in advance of the UK. From now on we're going to give our opinion on them ASAP, in the hope that publishers will snap them up for release over here.

Our line-up this month includes two brilliant new concepts from Japan. We've also got a couple of revivals that may be a waste of time, and finally a great game that you'll just have to hunt down on import 'cos we doubt it'll find its way here.

Since many games we cover will be Japanese, there could be problems understanding what's going on. To help you decide whether it's worth importing, we've included a Language Barrier rating.

All games covered are available now from import specialists, online or in the UK. Shop around for the best prices – don't get ripped off – but always, happy gaming!

Paul Davies
Paul Davies The Import King



RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

GAME INFO
IMPORT COST: £55
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
PUB: KONAMI
DEV: KONAMI
WWW.NAMCO.COM



When Cole is super-charged, nothing can stand in his way



You can see the power surge through Cole's arms as he blocks an attack from yon ugly

Breakdown deserves a 15 Certificate at least. Some violence is graphic!



Some kick-ass artillery is at your disposal – it's so cool you'd like to believe it's real



I WANNA LIE DOWN

If you take too many hits, your vision gets blurred and the controller starts throbbing away. It makes you feel like vomiting. Nice!

hordes of Res Evil Tyrants. Thankfully, Cole's enhanced strength helps him to smash their protective shields and deal the hurt – making for some wicked special effects as the hits land. Occasionally the first-person fisticuffs is a little disorientating, but once in the swing of it you feel like Arnie in Terminator.

CLEVER COMBAT

Sometimes the pace suffers 'cos of too many similar corridors or featureless wide-open spaces. But, when the action's tight, the clever combat system is fun to master, plus it all has an action-movie feel.

Breakdown is nowhere near as breathtaking as Halo (though it tries in places), but that's not to say it doesn't have blockbuster potential. In the end its originality is refreshing enough to carry you through. ★

BREAKDOWN

Swap your puny limbs for those of a sci-fi superhero

In Namco's Breakdown, we finally get a rocking FPS monster hunt – with more besides. Gameplay elements of Resident Evil, Half-Life and Halo combine, but central to it all is that you use the eyes and

ears, legs and arms of genetically enhanced US Marine, Derrick Cole.

He's suffering from trauma-induced amnesia, and your role throughout is to battle against the terrifying truths that he's somehow embroiled in.

PUNCH YOUR WAY OUT

Intense hand-to-hand combat sets Breakdown apart from any other FPS. Cole has amazing sci-fi artillery, but his party trick is getting in close to beat the crap out of things. A wide range of moves incorporates jabs and hooks, sliding kicks and elbow smashes. He can also jump in with

flying kicks. Initially, it's safer relying on incredi-guns and grenades to keep trouble away, but Cole is growing in supernatural strength. What's more, he has a sidekick to help him: a mercenary babe called AteX who takes after Trinity from The Matrix.

POWER PLAYS

Cole's power is induced by a serum called T'langen tested on US Marines to create an army of super-soldiers. Cole is the sole survivor of the experiments, but a renegade faction is also seeking to control T'langen, and is gathering an army of otherworldly creatures to take over our planet. Holy crapola!

At first, Cole is weak and suffers from hallucinations (a novel gameplay twist). In this state, he can't deal with larger enemies. However, when Cole is reunited with a doc who perfected the serum, he gets a critical dose to max out his superpowers so he can pummel the baddest of bad guys.

On his way to the enemy stronghold, Cole encounters monsters so powerful it's like being up against

PREVIOUS GAMES

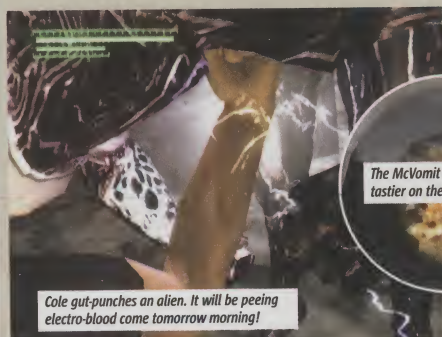
■ Pac-Man (III), Tekken Tag Tournament, R: Racing, Dead To Rights, Soulcalibur II

HARD FACTS

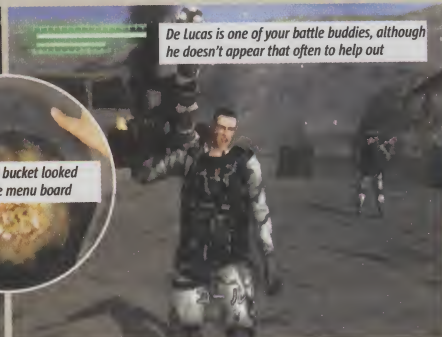
■ The UK version will have improved AI and overall balancing of gameplay
■ Electronic Arts has signed up Breakdown for a UK release. It's due out in June

DID YOU KNOW?

■ The US version (and possibly the UK's) will also have licensed music for the soundtrack



Cole gut-punches an alien. It will be peeing electro-blood come tomorrow morning!



De Lucas is one of your battle buddies, although he doesn't appear that often to help out

The McVomit bucket looked tastier on the menu board



GRAPHICS

Convincing locations but it often looks samey and isn't of the standard set by Halo

84

SOUND

Top effects when you scrap but atmospheric are a sonic whimper to Splinter Cell's scream

89

GAMEPLAY

A fun idea giving a wicked sensation of power but slow and a bit dull in places

82

LASTING APPEAL

Normal difficulty is tough enough but you'll want to go back and prove how 'ard you are

81

Sometimes you wish there were more people to fight, and the game could look better, but Breakdown is a great new concept and brilliantly executed

OVERALL SCORE

82

HOW IT COMPARES

HALO (XB)
BREAKDOWN (PS2)
UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP (XB)



LANGUAGE BARRIER: You can figure out the moves all by yourself without instructions. All the spoken dialogue is English, but the emphasis is on the action anyway.



RELEASE DATE

OUT NOW

GAME INFO

IMPORT COST: £45
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: HUDSON
* DEV: HUDSON
* WWW.HUDSON.CO.JP



PS2



RELEASE DATE

OUT NOW

GAME INFO

IMPORT COST: £55
PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: TAITO
* DEV: ALFA SYSTEM
* WWW.TAITO.CO.JP



“THESE GUYS DESERVE BEATING UP BECAUSE THEY KIDNAPPED ALL THE FAIRIES”

ADVENTURE ISLAND

A Caveman game by definition

Fourth in the ‘Hudson Collection’ – Hudson being one of the all-time-great Japanese developers in case you didn’t know.

There was once a time that Adventure Island’s Mr Higgins was a major star, challenging Mario and Megaman for a place at the top of the charts. But what’s on offer here is actually the 1987 game that made Higgins famous, spruced up with modern graphics. There’s also a bonus in the form of a Game & Watch type mini-game called Shooting Watch.



Mess with the fairies and you mess with Higgins. Looks mean, eh?

TO COLLECT OR NOT

This is the sort of game our ancestors got chills about, 15 years ago. It belongs to the bygone era of simplistic 2D platform games. On his Adventure Island, Higgins races from left to right, walloping cute beasties with a spear, boomerang, or axe while bagging fruit to stay alive. There are several worlds within

Adventure Island, at the heart of which lies a giant boss beastie. These guys deserve beating up because they kidnapped all the fairies, or something.

You essentially get barely more than a tasteful rehash of an old-school favourite. Its theme of power-ups and pixel-perfect jumps remains classic, but has been well and truly left behind. *



Find the fairy to make Higgins invincible for a few seconds, scoring points safely



Back in 1987, a skateboarding adventure dude was the height of almighty coolness!



CVG VERDICT

One for collectors only, and retro collectors at that. A classic game that has its place in time – 15 years ago. Maybe it should’ve been left there.

OVERALL SCORE

54

HOW IT COMPARES

MARIO SUNSHINE (GC)
ADVENTURE ISLAND (GC)
SONIC HEROES (GC, PS2, XBOX)



LANGUAGE BARRIER: It’s really obvious what you’ve got to do. Unless you want to know what the fairies are saying to Mr Higgins, dude



Drift close to a snaking arc of bullets to trigger your character’s more devastating attack

PRESS START
BUTTON
TO START

CASTLE OF SHIKIGAMI II

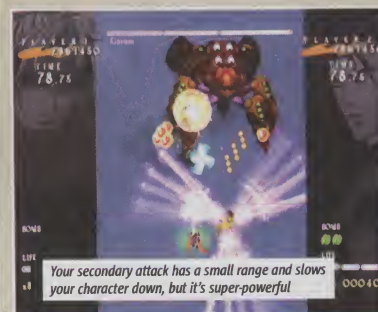
Dance with danger in Taito’s off-the-wall spectacular

Castle Of Shikigami II is like a snorting bull and you’re the matador. It’s an intimidating beast and to overpower it you’ve got to tempt danger and live on the edge.

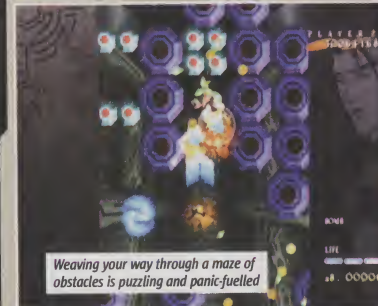
You’re rewarded for taking crazy chances – like a brain-frazzling combo of Ikaruga insanity and Burnout risk-taking! It’s a top-down airborne shooter, but instead of piloting spaceships you control one of seven bizarre superhuman characters, each with different patterns of attack. This is a welcome change from all the faceless machines we’re used to using.

THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS

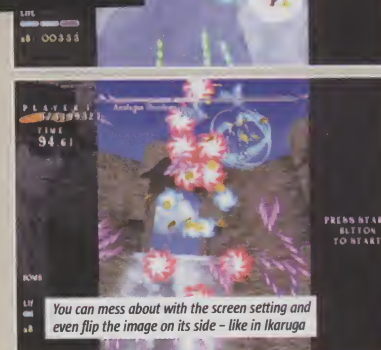
But that isn’t what makes Taito’s blaster so unique and furiously engaging. It’s the risk reward system that really hooks you bad.



Your secondary attack has a small range and slows your character down, but it’s super-powerful



Weaving your way through a maze of obstacles is puzzling and panic-fuelled



You can mess about with the screen setting and even flip the image on its side – like in Ikaruga

In the Burnout games, when you blister perilously into oncoming traffic your Burnout Gauge increases, enabling you to boost to wild speeds. Well, in COS II you’re rewarded for flying your character painfully close to the swarming bullets that fill the screen. So, whenever a projectile invades your personal space your weapons switch colour, doubling in size AND power.

It’s a simple idea, but works perfectly in this shooter because you NEED all the extra power you get in order to stand a chance of survival. Overall, it might not have Ikaruga’s polish, but it’s pretty close! *



CVG VERDICT

Taito’s super-adrenalised shooter puts a stylish new twist on an ancient game form. There’s never a dull nanosecond here so make sure you’re up for it!

OVERALL SCORE

82

HOW IT COMPARES

IKARUGA (GC)
CASTLE OF SHIKIGAMI II (PS2)
R-TYPE: FINAL (PS2)



LANGUAGE BARRIER: All the menus are easy enough to negotiate but it’s a shame that you won’t be able to understand the storylines threaded throughout.



RELEASE DATE

NOW

GAME INFO

IMPORT COST: \$55
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO

* PUB: TAITO
* DEV: RED ENTERTAINMENT
* WWW.DEARS.NE.JP (FOR GACKT!)



BUJINGAI

How Crouching Tiger's game should've been



Try to run behind some of the larger enemies to whack 'em on the arse!

SPACE BALLS

You're rewarded for stringing together the most consecutive hits, and also collecting the most mystical orbs from defeated enemies.

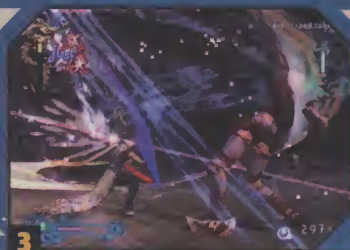
Plan your attacks to leave a trail of orbs between confrontations, as the orbs extend the time you've got to continue the chain of hits against a fresh enemy. We've managed over 100 strikes in succession, but it'll go much higher!



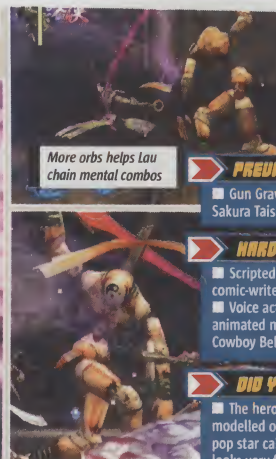
1 Action freezes the moment that you hit the counter-attack button. Hot damn - that sure looks purdy



2 Absorb the power of the enemy's attack, twirling the blades till they're like molten metal in motion



3 Close-range attacks are instantly reversed with spectacular effect. Look - flashier than a Darkness gig



More orbs helps Lau chain mental combos

PREVIOUS GAMES

Gun Grave, N.U.D.E., Sakura Taisen

HARD FACTS

■ Scripted by Japanese comic-writer behind Trigun
■ Voice actors of famous animated movies, such as Cowboy Bebop

DID YOU KNOW?

■ The hero Lau is modelled on a Japanese pop star called Gackt, who looks very feminine but talks tough and is hugely popular with the ladies!



Finally a game that captures the power and elegance of Hong Kong Cinema's most famous fight scenes.

Emulating the kind of swordplay made famous by Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon has proved difficult to achieve in a game. Namco's Soulcalibur took its influences, but chose another path to enlightenment. Predictably, the official game of the CTHD movie clumsily topped off its own head, collapsing in failure. At last, in Bujingai, the essence of hypnotic weapons-based combat is stunningly realised with incredible acrobatic style.

BREATHTAKING WUSHU

We expected flair from this game, as it's from the Gun Grave guys - they invented that dude with the long coat and a gun shaped like a coffin! Lau Wang Yu, the hero

When enemies are defeated they leave behind a stack of orbs to collect



CVG
SILVER
AWARD

BOSS CAT

Your jaw'll hit the floor when you meet this giant feline guardian, shortly followed by Lau hitting the deck because it's one tough pussy!

in Bujingai, is slightly less radical but no less capable of mayhem. Instead of shooting up the place, Lau wields two huge swords. He runs along walls and flies over short distances while sword fighting in the most fantastic fashion.

Lau parries, stabs, and swipes with his monster blades (sometimes even while airborne!) and often completes combos with a flurry of kicks to the torso or a stylish back flip. You trigger his moves by mixing inputs from the triangle, cross and square buttons. Lau also has a choice of magic attacks, mapped onto the circle button. You should see him go!

SUNGLASSES REQUIRED

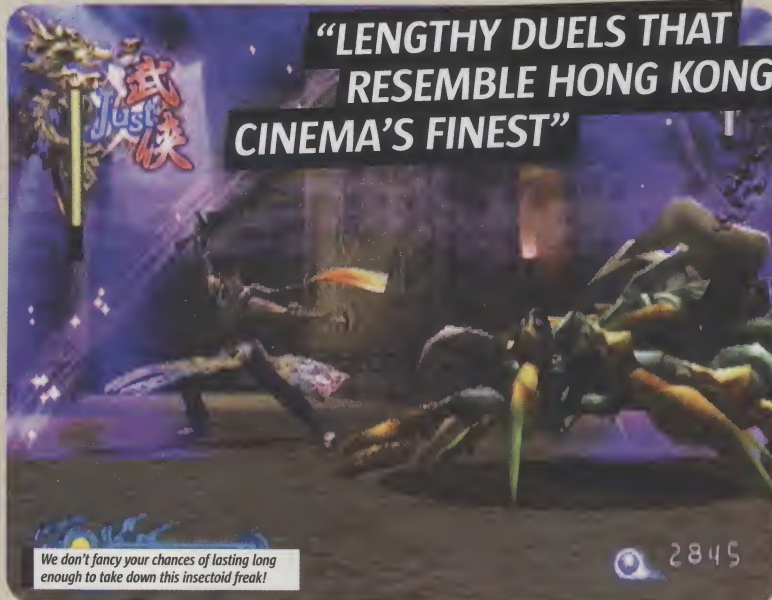
There's a higher purpose to all the fighting, but learn to counter-attack and you'll care for nothing but the action in front of you. Lau's Kengeki and Youjutsu counters are key to victory against increasingly robust opponents, reversing melee and projectile attacks. While parrying blows, Lau can respond with his own attack or store the

energy absorbed to use as magic.

The system used to control the counter-attacks is the most appealing aspect of the game - a meter representing the number of hits Lau can accept before sustaining damage, which is also devoured by Lau's counter-strikes. The trick is to seesaw between absorbing blows and dealing them, resulting in lengthy duels that resemble Hong Kong Cinema's finest.

Similar to Gun Grave, the brilliance of Bujingai is short-lived. There are only seven stages plus a few Boss battles. The difference is that Bujingai is tougher than Gun Grave, with more compelling reasons to go back and play to perfection. *

"LENGTHY DUELS THAT RESEMBLE HONG KONG CINEMA'S FINEST"



We don't fancy your chances of lasting long enough to take down this insectoid freak!



GRAPHICS

All the characters look terrific, especially the bosses, and the battle SFX are gobsmacking!

91

SOUND

We're into the music, but it might bug some people. Sound effects though are really cool!

89

GAMEPLAY

The fighting engine's glorious and we could play it all day, but you may find it repetitive

88

LASTING APPEAL

Only seven worlds. Quite a high challenge, plus you'll want to beat that combo count

79

This one's sure to knock your block off with its radical approach to 3D combat, though it's not everyone's cup of green tea and a bit short.

OVERALL SCORE

89

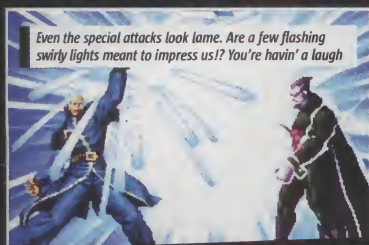
HOW IT COMPARES

OTOGI (XB)
BUNJINGAI (PS2)
CASTLEVANIA (PS2)

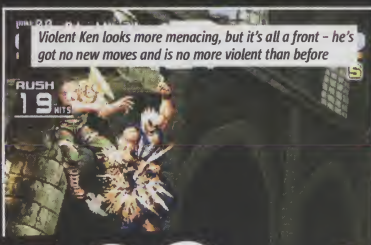


LANGUAGE BARRIER: Although it's all action, specific tasks must be completed before you can progress. Also it's hard figuring out your inventory since it's in Japanese

NOW

IMPORT COST: £55
PLAYERS: 1-2* PUB: SNK PLAYMORE
* DEV: SNK PLAYMORE
* WWW.SNKPLAYMORE.JP

Even the special attacks look lame. Are a few flashing swirly lights meant to impress us? You're havin' a laugh



Violent Ken looks more menacing, but it's all a front - he's got no new moves and is no more violent than before

SVC CHAOS

Retro knuckle-buster that deserves a bit of a kicking

2 D brawlers often get bitched about for not moving with the times, but once in a blue moon the genre evolves like it did with the online version of Capcom Vs SNK 2 for Xbox.

Then along comes a game like SVC Chaos to mess things up. You might as well hop in a time machine and zap yourself back a decade, because this PS2 slugger has all the graphical flair of a SNES title and plays like a ten-year-old game too.

TIME, PLEASE

The special attack gauge is almost identical to the old Capcom Groove system. Except that when it reaches maximum you've only got a few seconds to nail your super, forcing you to move in for the kill in a hurry. Hardly what you'd call re-inventing the wheel.

The only other change in the fighting system is your warrior's power bar. Once it runs out, it refills, then runs out again! A nonsense addition that's almost as embarrassing as SVC's fighting



Check the amazing shading on Earthquake's belly! One, two, three, FOUR colours!

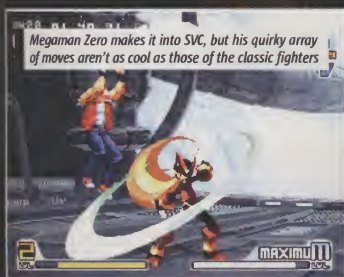
arenas. Unlike CVS2's gorgeously kooky 3D backdrops, SVC's stages are flat, empty and look like they've been designed by the most boring man in Japan. Any duller and they'd be black and white and come with a health warning.

It plays just like a King Of Fighters game, so if you're hardcore and into that style of retro beating you'll appreciate the roster of new characters, including the hidden newcomers like Violent Ken, who can be easily accessed by holding down R1 in the character select screen.

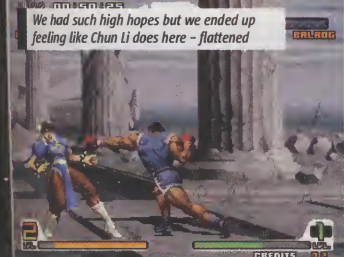
Otherwise, a second-rate step backwards in the school of 2D fighting. *



Looking for a fresh fighting experience? Better avoid SVC like Shin Gouki dodges Earthquake's smelly guffs



Megaman Zero makes it into SVC, but his quirky array of moves aren't as cool as those of the classic fighters



We had such high hopes but we ended up feeling like Chun Li does here - flattened



CVG
VERDICT

No amount of cool new fighters can divert your attention away from SVC's sloppy visuals and unimaginatively lightweight bouts.

OVERALL SCORE

51

HOW IT COMPARES

CAPCOM VS SNK 2 (XB)
SVC CHAOS (PS2)
VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION (PS2)



LANGUAGE BARRIER: Absolutely no problems with this. You don't need to a second language to know how to twat for England - though why you'd bother is beyond us

OVERSEAS CONSOLE RELEASE SCHEDULE



JAPANESE
RELEASE DATES

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
11/3	Monster Hunter	Capcom
	Jak II	Sony
	Sanma Nisai Deus Mechanica: Demon Bane	Kadokawa
18/3	La Corda D'oro	Koei
	Popolocrois IV: Tsuki No Oite No Bouken	Sony
	Simple 2000 Series Vol. 48 The Kanji Quiz	D3 Publisher
	Inu Yasha: The Cursed Mask	Bandai
	Saiyuki Reload	Bandai
	Cross Channel: To All People	Kid
	Freedom Fighters	EA
	Astro Boy: Tetsu Wan Atom	Sega
	Saints	Sony
	Remember 11: The Age Of Infinity	Kid
	Sakura Taisen: Mysterious Paris	Sega
	Pu Pu! Jaguar Jump	Konami
	Shin Sangoku Musou 3 Empires	Koei
	Renka	Chanz
25/3	The King of Fighters 2002	SNK Playmore
	Dragon Quest V	Square Enix
	Refrain	D3 Publisher
	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma	Atari
	War of Monsters	Capcom
	Sega Ages 2500 Series Vol. 10 After Burner II	3D Ages
	Sega Ages 2500 Series Vol. 11 Fist Of The North Star 3D Ages	3D Ages
	Princess Maker Refine	GeneX
	Steady x Study	Idea Factory
	Get Backers: Ura Shinjuku Saikyou Battle	Konami
	Door To Heart	GeneX
	Nechu Professional Baseball 2004	Namco
	Angel's Feather	Kid
	Mahjong Party Idol	Telenet Japan
	Nobunaga's Ambition Sousei	Koei
	Super Robot Taisen MX	Banpresto
	Armored Core Nexus	From Software
1/4	Doko Demo Issyo: Toro To Nigareboshi	Sony
	Golden Gouache Bell	Bandai
	Katamari Damacy	Namco
	UFC 2004	Marvelous
	KUON: Nine Grudges	From Software
8/4	Gunslinger Girl Vol. 1	Bandai
	Shaman King: Straddle Spirits	Konami
15/4	Kaena	Namco
	Happiness Operator	Sony

XBOX

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
25/3	Xbox Kasumi Chan Blue Bundle Pack	Microsoft
	Dead Or Alive Online	Tecmo
	Links 2004	Microsoft
	Counter-Strike	Microsoft
	Doctor Seuss' Cat In The Hat	Microsoft
15/4	Shikigami No Shiro II	Kids Station
22/4	DroneZ	Metro 3D
24/2	Puyo Puyo Fever	Sega

GAMECUBE

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
11/3	Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami
	Legend of Zelda: Four Swords +	Nintendo
18/3	Mobile Suit Gundam: Senshitachi No Kiseki	Bandai
24/3	Puyo Puyo Fever	Sega
25/3	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma	Atari

GAME BOY ADVANCE

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
18/3	Duel Master 2: Invisible Advance	Takara
	Prince of Tennis 2004: Glorious Gold	Konami
	Prince of Tennis 2004: Stylish Silver	Konami
	Mermaid Melody	Konami
	Yu-Gi-Oh Sugoroku	Konami
25/3	Bobobobo Bobobobo: Ultra Solider Nine	Hudson
	Kirby Star: Great Labyrinth of the Mirror	Nintendo
26/3	Dragon Ball Z: Moku Tougeki	Marvelous
	Digimon Racing	Banpresto
1/4	Tokyo Devil	Taito



AMERICAN
RELEASE DATES

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
15/3	Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft
16/3	Sitting Ducks	Hip Games
	MLB 2005	Sony
	Samurai Jack: The Shadow Of Aku	Sega
	X-Files: Resist Or Serve	Vivendi Uni.
	Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft
22/3	Fight Night 2004	EA
23/3	Trivial Pursuit Unhinged	Atari
	Backyard Baseball	Atari
	Seven Samurai 20XX	Sammy
	All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim
	Onimusha Blade Warriors	Capcom
	ESPN Major League Baseball	Sega
	Samurai Warriors	Koei
	Final Fantasy XI With HDD	Sony
29/3	Destruction Derby Arenas	Gathering
30/3	Daredevil: The Man Without Fear	Encore Soft
	Crimson Sea 2	AANG
	Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom
1/4	FunkMaster Flex's Digital Hit Factory	Jack of All Games
3/4	Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony
5/4	Ten Pin Alley 2	Jack of All Games
	Gradius V	Konami
	NBA Ballers	Midway
	Superstar GT	EA
	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar
6/4	Alias	Acclaim
12/4	UFC: Sudden Impact	TDK Mediactive
	Serious Sam	Global Star
15/4	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco

XBOX

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
16/3	Pure Pinball	XS Games
	Sitting Ducks	Hip Games
	Samurai Jack: The Shadow Of Aku	Sega
	Steel Battalion: Line Of Contact	Capcom
	Breakdown	Namco
22/3	Fight Night 2004	EA
23/3	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Atari
	Worms 3D	Acclaim
	ESPN Major League Baseball	Sega
	Yu-Gi-Oh! The King Of Destiny	Konami
	Dead Or Alive Ultimate	Tecmo
	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft
24/3	Dinosaur Hunting	Metro 3D
30/3	Daredevil: The Man Without Fear	Encore Soft
	Future Tactics: The Uprising	Crave
1/4	FunkMaster Flex's Digital Hit Factory	XG Games
5/4	NBA Ballers	Midway
	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar
	Manhunt	Rockstar
6/4	Alias	Acclaim
15/4	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco

GAMECUBE

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
16/3	Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Natsume
	Samurai Jack: The Shadow Of Aku	Sega
22/3	Pokémon Colosseum	Nintendo
23/3	Mission Impossible: Operation Surma	Atari
5/4	WarioWare Inc: Mega Party Games	Nintendo
15/4	Micro Mayhem	Jaleco
	World Championship Pool 2004	Jaleco

GAME BOY ADVANCE

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
15/3	Scooby-Doo 2 Monsters Unleashed	THQ
16/3	Wade Hixton's Counter Punch	Destination Soft
	A Sound of Thunder	BAM
	Ice Nine	BAM
	Sitting Ducks	Hip Games
23/3	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft
30/3	CT Special Forces 2	Hip Games

LOOK OUT NEXT MONTH!

We'll be back next month with another fistful of hot (as in great - we don't steal 'em!) imported games. We're definitely gonna chase down Capcom's Steel

Battalion. That of course, coming in the US box, and might even see what Sony's Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon is all about from Japan. Basically there's a lot of mascot for PS2 in Japan, and he has made funny little adventures. ANYWAY, see you next time!

Big 50!

Only the best games make it into our Big 50.
Don't fancy any of this month's reviews? One of these'll please you - guaranteed!

CALL OF DUTY 90%

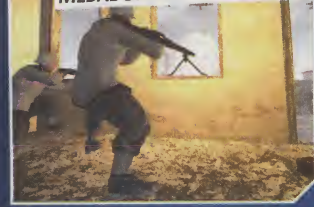
PC ■ Activision ■ £39.99



Kick Nazi ass in the best offline shooter on PC. Switch

nationalities and theatres of war in a range of missions so intense you'd swear you can smell the burnt-out buildings and taste the dog meat in your bully beef. With more scripted moments than an acceptance speech at the Brit Awards, you'll come away with a new respect for the sacrifices people made so that we can all sit around all day playing games.

TWATTING THE HUN'S NEVER BEEN MORE FUN - PUTS MEDAL OF HONOR IN THE SHADE



1080° AVALANCHE 82%

GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99



We love Amped 2 and SSX 3 but after finding our Cube under the sofa covered in fluff and Xmas muck, we've just rediscovered the pure arcade rush that sets Avalanche apart.

ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING 91%

GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99



Proof that strategy games aren't for specy twats called DarthMaul897364. Advance Wars 2 is addictive, challenging and... uh-oh, the F word... fun!

BANJO KAZOOIE: GRUNTY'S REVENGE 78%

GBA ■ THQ ■ £29.99



Guaranteed to make your kid brother shut the hell up. A smart top-down platformer with role-playing touches and busting with variety. But, like the stumpy red-crested Breegool herself, a bit too short.

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT 91%

PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ Acclaim ■ £39.99



For people that love driving VERY FAST, this is a gift from the gods. No-frills, balls-out, unadulterated arcade racing with wicked pile-ups. Still ace a year on.

CASTLEVANIA ARIA OF SORROW 80%

GBA ■ Konami ■ £29.99



Third GBA outing in a series famous for its brand of pure platforming pleasure and power-ups. This one's gone sci-fi but is most notable for a new soul-stealing skill, and that the hero's not a Belmont. Shock!

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 03-04 84%

PC ■ Eidos ■ £29.99



With less bugs and updated player stats, say goodbye both to soap and the real world, and embrace the crack-like phenomenon that is Champ Man. Ugly as a Southgate/Rooney lovechild, mind.

CIVILIZATION III 90%

PC ■ Atari ■ £9.99 (Conquest add-on £19.99)



Better than history lessons taught by a page 3 girl, re-write history as it should've been - with YOU in charge. Strategy-wise, it's as deep as it gets.

DANCE STAGE MEGAMIX/UNLEASHED 76%

PS2, Xbox ■ Konami ■ £29.99/£39.99



Plug in a dance mat and shake your booty - or cringe as your nan wobbles her chicken-wings. Groovier than titty-poppin' Justin Timberlake, a fave when friends and family are round.

EYETOY PLAY 74%

PS2 ■ Sony ■ £39.99



Another PS2 party fave making you the star. So simple that even footballers' wives could play it and just as shallow, the novelty value barely lasts long enough to avoid feeling swizzed.

FINAL FANTASY X 88%

PS2 ■ Sony ■ £19.99



The first FF for PS2 was a Choco-fanciers wet-dream. Massive and absorbing, the purer levelling up and skills system kicks over-drives up X-2's ass.

FINAL FANTASY IX 86%

PSone ■ Atari ■ £19.99



PSone's swan-song of all that was great about the series up to that point, but the dumbed-down levelling-up system led to beards at dawn among FF fans.

F-ZERO GX 91%

GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99



Frantically fast futuristic racer that proves Cube packs some processing punch. It won't make that carry-handle look any less stupid though.

GOLDEN SUN 85%

GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99



An RPG that lacks nothing in terms of scale and longevity, despite being on the miniature GBA. Small things are the future! More innovative than part two.

GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC 93%

PS2 ■ Sony ■ £19.99



Want a garage full of classic cars but can't be arsed to work for a living or even go steal them all? Dust this one off in preparation for GT4 instead.

HALO 95%

Xbox, PC ■ Microsoft ■ £19.99



Sci-fi shooter that sold the system, two years on and many console shooters are still struggling to come up to par. Worth owning an Xbox just to play.

LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER 2 78%

PS2, Xbox ■ Eidos ■ £19.99



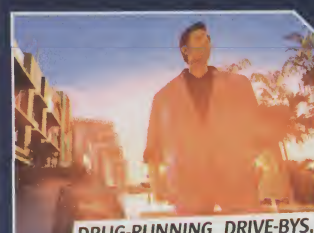
Does everything a platformer does but it's dark, rich gameworld makes you feel there's much more to it - which there is, like real-time morphing environments! Best of the series by far.

GRAND THEFT AUTO: DOUBLE PACK 95%

Xbox, PS2 ■ Rockstar ■ £39.99



Take two bottles into the shower? Not any more 'cos GTA III and sequel Vice City just got double-packed. Like giving grenades to an angry gorilla and telling him to go play nicely with the monkeys, GTA lets you loose in a concrete jungle where anything goes, so long as it's on the wrong side of the law. They'll still be talking about these two in ten years time.



DRUG-RUNNING, DRIVE-BYS, DEMOLISHING BUILDINGS AND HOS - WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE?

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC 90%

Xbox, PC ■ Activision ■ £39.99



Finally, a decent Star Wars game and not a

skanky Skywalker or pathetic pod race in-sight. Geeky nirvana, but as far as addictive habits go, this RPG is up there with hairy-palming (and no, that doesn't involve a Wookiee... well, not usually). Weapons and Force skills make battling memorable and it boasts a better combat system than Final Fantasy. Pursue the Light or Dark path of the Force, this is so good you'll have to play it twice.

MORE FUN THAN WAXING A SHE-WOOKIE'S BIKINI-LINE BUT JUST AS BEARDY



MANHUNT 72%

PS2 ■ Rockstar ■ £39.99



The current king of controversy, it starts out all stealth and edgy violence but ends up as a case of style over substance. While it lasts, you'll be killing your hunters with sadistic glee.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! 86%

GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99



Closer to the N64 than the beloved SNES version, DD tries to be a crowd-pleaser but some players hate its kiddier karts and stretched-out tracks.

MARIO SUNSHINE 92%

GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £19.99



Reinvented platform action thanks to the Ron Jeremy look-alike's new backpack. More magical moments than David Blaine's shazam hands.

MAX PAYNE 2: FALL OF MAX PAYNE 84%

PC, PS2, Xbox ■ Rockstar ■ £34.99



Yet more hard-nosed, stylish shooting shenanigans with Bullet Time and amnesia as Max scores again. PC and Xbox versions are let down by slow frame rates and long loading on PS2.

METROID PRIME 93%

GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £19.99



Classic platformer melded with first-person shooter into a totally unique-feeling actioner that's perfectly paced, heavily atmospheric and hard!

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE 81%

PS2, Xbox, PC ■ Konami ■ £39.99



Sons Of Liberty gets a remix. Now with more Snake and less of that albino fop. Makes you wonder why they didn't do it right the first time. Helped define the stealth genre, but the plot is quite nuts.

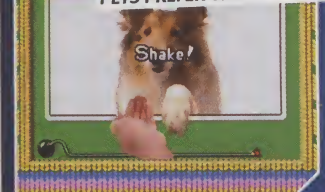
WARIO WARE INC.

88%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

Over 200 extreme mini-games and only split-seconds to play each one. Pick someone's nose, shake trees to get fruit and slice steaks – it sounds like a disaster waiting to happen and when you throw in some basic graphics it looks shabby too. Incredibly, though, Wario Ware is one of the smartest, most devious and addictive games ever created, even if it is all over a bit too quickly. Proof that size really doesn't matter. It's what you do with it that counts! Isn't that right ladies?

NINE OUT OF TEN DOG OWNERS SAID THEIR PETS PREFER WARIO WARE



NBA STREET 2

83%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA Sports ■ £39.99

Basketball goes back to the street... again. Fast, funky, full of neat tricks and fantastic commentary, Street 2 really does capture the feel of the sport perfectly.

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

91%

■ PS2, Xbox, PC, GameCube, GBA ■ EA ■ £39.99

A blinding racer for anyone that loves attaching spinning rims and kitting their motor out with a booming sound system. Everyone, then!

POKEMON PINBALL RUBY/SAPPHIRE

86%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

The best pinball game ever, it's dead clever the way it combines collecting the furry critters with frantically slapping your Pokéball with your flippers. Ack ack!

POKEMON SAPHIRE/RUBY

87%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

Catch yet more furry creatures, train them and then go to battle against fellow Pokemaniacs. It may look pants but this is pure gaming gold, honest.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME

89%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, PC ■ UbiSoft ■ £39.99

Ace platformer that likes to get all Craig David with a fancy "Can I get a rewind?" time-travel feature. Looks lovely, but a bit short and buggy too.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

95%

■ PS2, PC ■ Konami ■ £39.99

Best football game on the planet. What more do you want us to say? Oh yeah... no real players. Well, we've all gotta have some dreams, right?

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

93%

■ Xbox ■ Microsoft ■ £39.99

Street racing thrills in sumptuous looking cities with awesome Xbox Live support too. Bit of a slow-burner till you've got some cool cars.

RAINBOW SIX 3

84%

■ PS2, Xbox ■ UbiSoft ■ £39.99

Great squad-based tactical shooter that feels more realistic than other games in this arena. You'll look a twat wearing that headset to talk to people though. PS2's outing is the weakest, too.

SILENT HILL 3

77%

■ PS2, PC ■ Konami ■ £39.99

If a tree was chopped down in Silent Hill and no-one was around, would it still make a noise? More spooky going's on in the foggy, radio-unfriendly small town. Ties up all 1 and 2's loose ends.

THE SIM'S BUSTIN' OUT

73%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, GBA ■ EA ■ £39.99

The videogame equivalent of Big Brother. Has you hooked for weeks then you come out of the coma asking who the hell is Cameron and what are you doing with your life anyway?

SIM CITY 4

79%

■ PC ■ EA ■ £34.99

Make like a mayor and build the metropolis of your dreams. Just don't come running to us for help if your water pipes burst – we know a few plumbers but they're all rubbish.

SOULCALIBUR 2

88%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA/Nintendo ■ £39.99

Looks great but weak AI makes one-player too easy and the fighting system just isn't deep enough to last in multiplayer. We prefer Virtua Fighter.

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL

89%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, PC, GBA ■ UbiSoft ■ £39.99

A stealth-based adventure that'll keep you hooked from start to finish. Do like us – brush up on your skills now in preparation for the rock 'ard sequel.

ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER

95%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99

It'll hook you in with absorbing graphics and keep you captivated with genius gameplay. Put it next to Girls Aloud cavorting naked in bed (with the ginger one locked out of the room) and we'd be with the little guy.



NINTENDO'S MIDGET ORLANDO BLOOM RETURNS IN ANOTHER AWESOME MASTERPIECE

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

89%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, PC ■ EA Sports ■ £39.99

Someone should have told Siegfried and Roy that there are easier ways to tame a tiger. This is the Gran Turismo of golf games – it's that good!

TIMESPLITTERS 2

91%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ Eidos ■ £19.99

Comedy time-travelling shooter with great levels and wicked multiplayer modes. If you loved GoldenEye on N64, snap this up.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

79%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, GBA ■ Activision ■ £39.99

The weakest game in the series, but Tony's still the chairman of the board when it comes to skating on your console. Made us wish Jackass' Bam Margera would do his own videogame.

TOP SPIN

83%

■ Xbox ■ Microsoft ■ £39.99

"Anyone that says Virtua Tennis is better cannot be serious. Wedge a racket up their ass and make them play this, that'll learn 'em real good". A direct quote from CVG's Grazza, no less.

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

77%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA/Activision ■ £39.99

If you're a fan of GTA then True Crime will have you spitting bullets out your butt at the similarities. The city itself is vast, but once again it's a case of less could've been more. Mad ending too.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

87%

■ PC ■ Atari ■ £34.99

Online shooter that plays as good as it looks. 2K3's much-vaunted missing vehicles finally turned up while the original's best mode got reinstated.

VIEWTUFUL JOE

89%

■ GameCube ■ Capcom ■ £39.99

A kung-fu fighting superhero with more Bullet Time tricks than the whole Matrix trilogy. Crazy, unique and very, very cool – viewtiful even!

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION

93%

■ PS2 ■ Sega ■ £39.99

Tekken 4? Parp! Virtua Fighter 4 is where the big boys play. This is the current pinnacle of 3D beat 'em ups. Just a pity Akira looks like Peter Andre.

WWE SMACKDOWN! HCTP

87%

■ PS2 ■ THQ ■ £39.99

The series gets bigger and better each year and now you can play Bra and Panties matches a/c the laydeez it's the best wrestling game ever!

LEGEND OF ZELDA: LINK TO THE PAST

92%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

A blast from Nintendo's past, but now with the added Four Swords multiplayer game. A piece of magical adventuring you've got to check out.

Do you agree with CVG? If you think there's something missing, write it and let us know. mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

NEW ENTRIES

NEW

SPLINTER CELL

A re-entry for Sam Fisher and his sphincter smell (sorry)! as we dust off the original in anticipation of the awesome looking sequel.

1080° AVALANCHE

Something of a sympathy vote this one – we're feeling so sorry for our Cube at the moment that we forced ourselves to relive it's glory days.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME

Not strictly a new entry but it's recently gone multi-format and not enough people are getting the message about how great it is!

DROP-OUTS

IKARUGA

A 2D scrolling shooter with plenty of razzle dazzle and a cool strategical twist. A hardcore fave.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

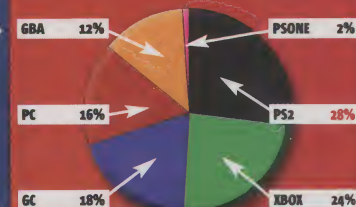
We loved this squad-based shooter, but both the true sequel and Xbox version have gone AWOL.

RESIDENT EVIL

Looking at Resident Evil 4 makes us wish Capcom had ditched the remakes and cut to the real deal.

FORMAT FACE-OFF

Which formats rule CVG's Big 50 chart this month? Here's the breakdown...



BEST AND WORST OF THE LAST 3 MONTHS

Missed an issue of CVG and want to know what the reviews highlights and lowlights were? Here you go...

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004	87%
PC	
KILL SWITCH	82%
PS2/XB	
CASTLEVANIA	86%
PS2	
007 EVERYTHING OR NOTHING	82%
PS2/XB/GC/GBA	
URBAN FREESTYLE SOCCER	34%
PS2/XB/GC/PC	
GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK	95%
XB/PS2	
KYA DARK LINEAGE	82%
PS2	
CONFLICT DESERT STORM II	83%
GC	
TUPAC	81%
PS2	
STAR WARS GALAXIES	77%
PC	
1080° AVALANCHE	82%
GC	
MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA	87%
GBA	
THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT	73%
XB/GC/PS2/GBA	
CROUCHING TIGER HIDDEN DRAGON	26%
PS2	
BEYBLADE FORCE	15%
GC	

Max blue weapon power

R2, R2, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ○

Max yellow power

R2, R2, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ×



MEGAMAN X2

PS2

Not so sure about the Mega, Megaman. You look like a little fella to me. Still, nothing that can't be enhanced with the right equipment...

* Body Armour for X

Go to the plane place and make your way to Area 3. When you reach the intersection run to the left.

* Buster Armour for X

Go to the place with Hyanard in Area 1. Then get to the fourth fire dragon and beat it. Jump down and dash to the left or you'll hit the fire.

* Foot Armour for X

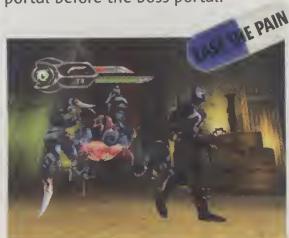
Go to Stonekong place and approach the boss. When you get to the stones stacked up there's an enemy behind it, so use Zero and double-jump to get hold of a branch.

* Glide Armour separate from X

When you get all the parts for the Glide Armour, go to Team Select for a mission. You will be told you that you can use X or Armour X.

* Head Armour for X

Go to the place with Ant-eater and make your way to Area 2. Get to the the boss, but go into the gravity portal before the boss portal.



SPAWN - ARMAGEDDON

PS2, XBOX, GC

If there's one thing I love it's bodily fluids, so Spawn's No Blood mode turns me right off. The others have my juices flowing, though. Pause the game and tap them in on the D-pad for some spawny bonuses.

* All weapons

↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ←, →

* Infinite ammo

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, →

* Infinite Necroplasm

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, →

* No blood

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, →

* Unlock all comics

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, →

* All missions

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, →

* Encyclopedia

↑, ↓, ←, →, ↑, ↓, ←, →

DOWNHILL DOMINATION

PS2

You can't beat a good rough ride. I always get a bit saddle-sore afterwards, though. Anyone fancy helping me apply some ointment? During a run, enter these commands to unlock the following codes:

↑, ↓, ←, →, ←, →, ←, →

"Cheats unlocked" will flash on screen - this will only last for one run, so enter these codes at any time during the run!

* Anti-Gravity

↓, △, ○, □, ↑

* Super Bunny Hop

↑, ×, ←, □, ↑

* Super Bounce

↑, □, ×, ↑, △

* Mega Flip

↓, ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, □

* Adrenaline Boost

↓, ←, ←, ↓

* Combat Upgrade

↑, ↓, ←, ←, ↓

* Stoke Trick Meter

↓, ←, ←, ↓, ↓

* Upgrade to Bottle

↑, ↓, ←, ←, ↓, ↓

* Energy Restore

↓, ↓, ↓, ←, ←

* Always Stoked

↓, □, □, ←, ○

* No Combat

←, □, ○, □, ×

* Extra Smack Time

←, ↓, ↓, ↓

* Infinite Bottles

↑, ×, ←, ←, ○, ○

* More \$\$\$

↓, ↑, ↑, ○, ○, ○

* Speed Freak

↓, △, ↓, ↓, □

* Unlimited Energy

↓, △, ←, ←, □



TOP 20 TIPS

NURSE CVG'S RED HOT PRESCRIPTION LIST

1 NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

PS2, XBOX, GC

On the main menu enter this code to unlock all the drag tracks:

GC: Right, Z, Left, R Trigger, Z, L Trigger, Y, X

XBOX: Right, X, Left, R Trigger, X, L Trigger, White, Black

PS2: ↓, □, ←, R1, ○, L1, L2, R2



2 NORTON INTERNET SECURITY

PC

Stop downloading porn. That'll stop you getting viruses, you mucky little devils. If all else fails, keep this under your bed

3 FIFA 2004

PS2, XBOX, GC, PS

Beat all of the teams in the English Premiership to unlock their third kits! That's some kind of reward!

4 THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN

PS2, XBOX, GC

On the main menu (the living room), tap in these buttons to unlock extra fast vehicles

GC: X, X, X, X PS2: △, △, △, △ XBOX: X, X, X, X

5 LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING

PS2, XBOX

Tap in these codes for invulnerability:

PS2: □, ○, □, ↓ XBOX: X, B, X, Up GC: X, B, X, Up

6 MAFIA

PS2, XBOX

Beat the game to get access to Free Ride mode; it's got new cars, no cops, and an entire city to trash!

7 EYETOY: PLAY

PS2

Plug in a pad and press ↑, ↑, ↑, ↓, L1, L2, L1, L2 on the game selection screen to unlock everything!

8 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

PS2, XBOX, GC

To unlock all objects:

PS2: Tap in R2, L1, R1, L2, ←

GC: Down, L Trigger, Z, R Trigger, Left, Right XBOX: L

Trigger, Black, R, Blue, L. Then PS2: L2, R2, ↑, △, L3

GC: Down, Z, L, R, R Trigger XBOX: Black, A, Y, Down, R Trigger

9 GTA DOUBLE PACK

XBOX

To lower your wanted level press these

codes in at any time:

GTA 3: Black, Black, L Trigger, Black,

↑, ↑, ↑, ↓, ↓, Down

GTA: VC: R Trigger, R Trigger, B, Black, ↑, ↑, ↑, ↑, ↑, ↑

10 MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

PS2, XBOX, GC

To get unlimited ammo, enter this code at the password screen: GC: DISCUS

XBOX: JAWFISH

PS2: GOBY

11 CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 03/04

PC

Save yourself some dosh by signing strong veterans or young stars on free transfer at the end of the season

12 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

PS2, XBOX, GC, PC

Enter in the password "THEKITCHENSINK" to unlock all courses and golfers

13 MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE

PS2, XBOX, GC

Invincibility: Pause the game and press □, L1, ○, R1, △, L2, SEL, R2

14 GTA: VICE CITY

PS2

To get full health at any time, press R1, R2, L1, ○, Left, Down, Right, A, Left, Down, Right, A

15 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

PS2, XBOX, GC

At the cheat screen, enter in "keepitsteady" for perfect manual balance

16 HITMAN 2 - SILENT ASSASSIN

PS2, XBOX

Unlock level select: enter these codes at the main menu. PS2: R2, L2, ↑, ↓, ○, △, ○ XBOX: R Trigger, L Trigger, Up, Down, X, Y, B

17 EYETOY: GROOVE

PS2

Get an A in any given song to unlock the Master mode; you'll have to shake your ass like Beyoncé!

18 LORD OF THE RINGS THE TWO TOWERS

PS2, XBOX, GC, PC

To unlock the Tower of Orthanc beat the game and get your character to level 10.

19 TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

PS2, XBOX, GC

To make Nick look like a SAS-style commando enter your name as "M1K3"

20 TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2004

PS2, XBOX, PC

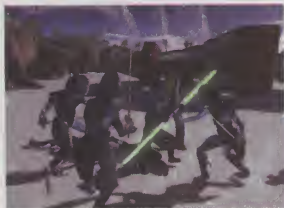
Give your team's morale a boost by snaring them a magazine subscription. Razzle would be a good choice - or anything with Readers' Wives

SHOW US YOUR TIPS!

LET NURSE CVG GIVE YOUR TIP THE ONCE OVER

Go on then, show me. There's nothing to be embarrassed about. Just whip them out! See, this is the section of the Surgery where you get the chance to share your tips with the world.

Found a cheat that'll cure a raging gameplay fever? Discovered a secret that you'd love to whisper in my ear? Or have you nailed a tactic that proves your status as a gaming god? Send 'em in! And since I love getting a good tip, I'll show you exactly what I thought of your efforts. You never know, if you send me something really red hot you might send me over the edge...



KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

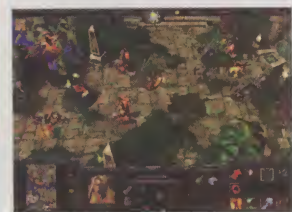
PC, XBOX

Hey CVG! In the final area of KOTOR, the Star Forge, there's a cutscene where the Light and Dark Jedis fight. Kill everybody and head down to Deck 2.

Follow the straight path and near the end, close to the command centre, you'll find a replicator; use 35 computer slices on it to get either the awesome Star Forge Robe (Light Side) or Darth Revan's Robes (Dark Side). This armour makes the final battle much easier!

Jamie, London

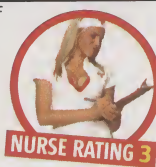
CVG I hate choosing between my dark side and my light side... Can't I have both?



WARCRAFT III: THE FROZEN THRONE

PC

In mission 3 of The Blood Elf: The Dungeons of Dalaran, head south-east and then left into the large corridor. Battle your way through the humans and head into the long corridor to the left, which is full of... sheep! Hit the switches in sequence so you hear 'bah', 'ram', 'yew', then complete the level and you'll get to play the hidden mission. Then beat that to give you an ultra strong panda!



NURSE RATING 3

Paul, Manchester

CVG Graeme got really excited about this tip - must have been all the sheep noises.



DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

PS2

When you go into the shop menu, hold down L2 and leave. Each time you do this your completion percentage goes up, so keep doing this until it goes up to 100 per cent - to unlock EVERYTHING!

Robbie, Devon

CVG I DO want it all but I'm sick of playing with Dragon Balls. Got anything less scaly?



MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

PS2, XBOX, GC

You know all those ropes and trees all over the place that you couldn't work out how to get past? Well, you need the machete to cut them down. In Pistol Pete Showdown, make your way to the house behind the three prisoners of war. Behind it you'll discover a place you can crawl inside and that's where you'll find the machete!

Daniel, Edinburgh

CVG That's more like it. If there's one thing I love it's a man wielding a big tool.



NURSE RATING 4



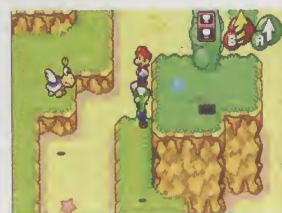
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PS2, GC

If you're stuck trying to find the last mDisk, log onto <http://darkroom.ubi.com/> and register. Once you've done that, enter in the 16-character code from one of your saved games. The four-digit code you get opens the locked cabinet by Francis's table, on the first floor of Akuda's bar.

James, Portsmouth

CVG Fantastic tip, and it might even keep you off those dirty websites for a while...



MARIO & LUIGI: SUPERSTAR SAGA

GBA

When you're in Hoochoo Mountain for the first time, find the fountain that fills Mario with water. Fill him up, move him south, then to the left, and shoot the fan - it'll dispense a mushroom. Keep repeating this for a further 11 mushrooms, and then an unlimited amount of coins!

Ben, Birmingham

CVG Aaah, Mario... That moustache, that cute pot-belly, and after this tip, loads of money to keep me stocked up with stethoscopes. I'd treat him better than that Peach bitch.



NURSE RATING 4



NURSE RATING 5

LIFE SAVER

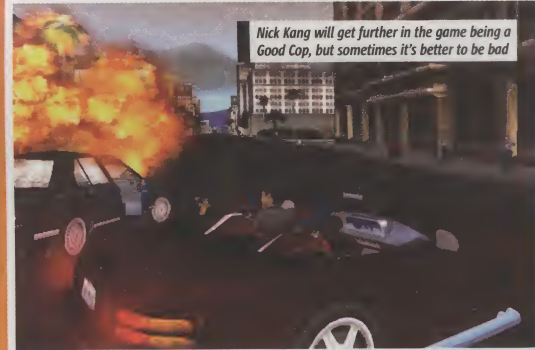
TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.

PS2, XBOX, GC

To get Good Cop points really, really quickly, go to the street called Rose Avenue in Venice and frisk anyone you see. Most people are carrying drugs or guns so you'll get +1 Good Cop points per frisk!

Alex, Cardiff

CVG Oh yes! This is the kind of frisky hint that gives me stiff tipples - keep these coming and I'll be happy!



Nick Kang will get further in the game being a Good Cop, but sometimes it's better to be bad

FLATLINER

POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

GBA

If you're having trouble catching Latias and Latios in Pokémon, use your Pokédex to find out where they are. Cut them off so you're on the same route as them, then SAVE! If you kill them or let them run, just reload the saved game! Also, using a Pokémon with a mean look like Golbat will stop them from running.

Michael, London

CVG I'm drawing a line under this Pokémon stuff - if you want to play with your little monsters, don't tell me about it. Tag it and bag it, boys!



Pokémon: I'm so sick of hearing about it I think I need to give myself some medical attention!

NURSE RATING 1

CVG FIRST AID KIT

Gaming grazes patched up by Nurse CVG's gentle hands

So then he showed me it and it was all purple and swollen and throbbing. And that's the time I treated David Beckham's metatarsal bone.

Anyway, welcome to First Aid, the final part of the Surgery. You send in your problems, I have a rummage through my box and offer the appropriate treatment. I'll be working closely with the CVG lads, so you'll get the benefit of their expert skills lovingly caressed into your gaming ailments with my own soft hands.

This month I've got tactics for Mario Kart and Counter-Strike, a trick in Project Gotham 2 that'll make you look like the coolest cat in town, and the ultimate guide to free kicks and corners in Pro Evo 3. I just wish someone would explain the offside rule...

Keep sending in your problems – there's nothing more frustrating for a girl than having an empty mailbox. See you next month!

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!!

Grrr! I suck at Mario Kart: Double Dash!! My mates keep beating me and I keep getting left behind in big races 'cos they always muscle in and get lucky with power-ups! They even beat me in Battle mode! Help!

Harry, Newcastle

CVG Don't ask me about driving, I can't reverse park a shopping trolley. But I asked Graeme, and he reckons choosing a Koopa and Daisy or Peach allows a good balance of defence and attack. Also, when skidding round a corner push the analogue stick against the direction of your turn until the sparks under your kart go blue, and when you straighten up you'll get a huge boost of speed!

MARIO KART PATCHED UP AND SHIPPED OUT!

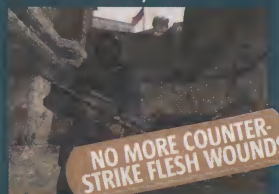
COUNTER-STRIKE

I just got Counter-Strike on Xbox, and I hate it! Every time I play online, I just get shot to ribbons! What the hell is this?

Ryan, Hemel Hempstead

CVG This is the kind of problem I deal with all the time. You boys are always rushing in, trying to get your shot off. Just slow it down, take your time. Use an

element of surprise; wait for them to come to you, and get yourself into the best position to shoot your load. On top of that, flash-bangs are vital for confusing opponents so you can shoot them in the head. One of my favourite films, Flashbang. Great dance sequences...



NO MORE COUNTER-STRIKE FLESH WOUNDS

METROID PRIME

Sup CVG? I've just picked up Metroid Prime cheap for GameCube – absolute bargain but I can't collapse the Tower in Phendrana Drifts. I need to destroy it to get the Artefact of Elder. How do I do it?

Jason Burgess, West Bromwich

CVG Metroid Prime's one of my favourite games – it's so refreshing to play with another girl for a change. You need to get to the Chozo Ice Temple, melt the ice around the statue with your plasma beam, then jump into the statue's hands as the Morph Ball. That unlocks the way to the artefact. Sorted.

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

You've got to help me CVG – I love Project Gotham 2 but I can't compete on Live. Every time I race I get creamed! I

need something to mark me out from the crowd!

Matthew, London

CVG Apparently skidmarks are the answer, but don't expect me to do your washing. Nothing marks out a newbie like crap powerslides, so practise skidding to perfection. And if you really want to turn heads, try this trick...

OVERTAKIN' THE PISS OUT OF YOUR MATES

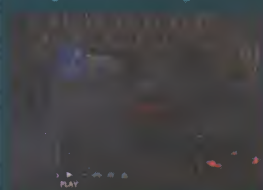
■ On the Moscow St Basil's Circle track there's a corner where the road dips suddenly. Draft someone and floor it as you hit the drop...



■ And you'll launch your motor into the air! If you've lined it up right and got enough speed...



■ You'll shoot right over your opponent's head, earning you kudos for the overtake, the air, and for making him look like a right tube!



■ Then slam on the brakes and turn the wheel right so that when you land you'll be lined up for the bend! Sweet!

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

I hear you guys play a lot of Pro Evo 3, so I thought I'd ask – how do I take corners and free kicks perfectly? My mates keep sticking them away but I can't seem to get them down properly.

Mike McDonald, Belfast

CVG It is the beautiful game, isn't it? Lots of men with beautiful legs in beautiful short shorts... Oh, that other stuff? Mike'll show you...

PERFECTING YOUR CORNERS

■ Use a right-footed player from the right, and a left-footed player from the left, then push your aim right over to the touchline



■ You're aiming for this much power, about 6/10 of the bar, while pushing diagonally up and left on the D-pad for out-swinging curl



■ The ball should swing just out of the keeper's reach, but deep enough into the six-yard box to catch defenders napping



■ Gerrard's got a sitter here, but even if you're marked the ball's likely to end up in the net. One-nil!

SLAMMIN' HOME YOUR FREE KICKS

■ Aim between the heads of the players in the wall and look for shorties. Use the centre line on the radar as an aiming guide



■ The power you apply will depend on the distance, but just over half is a safe amount to go for



■ Press diagonally up and right (or left) to keep the height down and curl it. It'll start swinging when it leaves your boot. Stick it where the back of the net meets the roof...



■ Ideally, the further you can stick it into the corner the better. Pick that one out!

THE SURGERY IS NOW OPEN!

Nurse CVG is here to heal your pain! If your mates are making a monkey out of you, or if you don't have any mates and are suffering in horrible, lonely silence, CHEER UP, DAMMIT! Look, there's a hot woman in a nurse's outfit who wants to help! Are you a fool?

Maybe you're someone who's uncovered something special in a game... Well, get it out and share it with the world! Or at least show it to the Nurse. Honestly, if anyone can handle a tip, it's Nurse CVG.

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5079 Little Mix Naughty	7305 PSYCHO	3989 RIZLA
7728 2 HOT 2 HANDLE	7273 U TOUCH DU DIE	7824 T-Mobile
7272 THIS PHONE IS HOT	7311 STARS HAPPENS	3469 3461
6325 Nasty Tart	7259 ENGLAND	3712 7740
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7328 4036	7777 7470	5526 5589	7466 5581

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MUSIC RINGTONES

MONOPHONIC & POLYPHONIC RINGTONES - mono code first, poly code second if available

	MONO	POLY		MONO	POLY		MONO	POLY
2Pac - Changes	5156	9240	DJ Sammy - Heaven	7137	8366	Metallica - St Anger	8934	8929
2Pac - Thugz Mansion	8144	-	DMX - X Gon' Give It To Ya	8593	8659	Michael Andrews - Mad World	9657	9652
2Play - So Confused	9713	9710	Electric Six - Gay Bar	8724	8661	Michelle - All This Time	9698	9690
50 Cent - 21 Questions	8973	8636	Eminem - Business	8997	8662	Milk Inc - Walk On Water	7685	-
50 Cent - In Da Club	8133	8300	Eminem - Cleanin' Out	7542	7859	Murderdolls - White Wedding	8946	9571
50 Cent - Pimp	9078	9386	Eminem - Lose Yourself	8137	8101	Nelly - Dilemma	7952	7951
50 Cent - W***sta	9644	9624	Eminem - Stan	3922	-	Nickelback - How You	6253	6949
Afroman - Because I Got High	5403	-	Eminem - Superman	9642	9621	Obie Trice - Got Some Teeth	9407	9378
All American Rejects - Swing Swing	9062	-	Eminem - Without Me	6604	6976	Offspring - Hit That	9686	9674
Angel City - Love Me	9466	-	Emma - I'll Be There	9767	9760	Outkast - Hey Ya	9503	9515
Atomic Kitten - Ladies Night	9661	9651	Europe - Final Countdown	5353	9567	Pink - God Is A DJ	9768	9759
Avril Lavigne - Sk8er Boi	7858	8312	Evanescence - Bring Me To	8605	8774	Pink - Just Like A Pill	7238	8470
B2K Ft P Diddy - Bump Bump	8017	8314	Evanescence - Going Under	9167	9256	Pink - Trouble	9463	9482
Benny Benassi - Satisfaction	9017	9036	Fast Food Rockers - Fast Food	8780	8775	R Kelly - Ignition Remix	8210	8476
Beyonce - Baby Boy	9356	9360	Fatman Scoop - Be Faithful	9404	9376	Rachel Stevens - Sweet Dreams	9218	9267
Beyonce - Crazy In Love	8765	8646	Flip & Fill - Irish Blue	9704	9694	Red Hot Chili Ps - By The Way	7669	-
Beyonce - Me Myself & I	9714	9709	Flip & Fill - Shooting Star	6937	-	Red Hot Chili Ps - Can't Stop	8143	8478
Big Brovaz - Baby Boy	9197	9236	Franz Ferdinand - Take Me Out	9712	9711	Red Hot Chili Ps - Fortune Faded	9506	9577
Big Brovaz - Favourite Things	8618	8648	Funeral For A Friend - Escape	9781	9778	Red Hot Chili Ps - Zephyr Song	7831	-
Black Eyed Peas - Shut Up	9586	9599	G Unit - Stunt 101	9756	9742	Salt N Pepa - Push It	9646	9619
Black Eyed Peas - Where Is The	9195	9246	Gareth Gates - Spirit In Sky	8214	8393	Samba Di Janeiro - Bellini	9753	9721
Black Sabbath - Paranoid	4013	7169	Girls Aloud - Jump	9511	9522	Scissor Sisters - Comfortably	9746	9724
Blazin' Squad - Flip Reverse	9488	9484	Good Charlotte - Girls Boys	8606	8665	Scooter - Logical Song	6818	8053
Blazin' Squad - Here 4 One	9780	9779	Good Charlotte - Lifestyles	8070	8400	Scooter - Maria	9348	9736
Blink 182 - Feeling This	9497	9576	Good Charlotte - The Anthem	8945	9194	Scooter - Weekend	8249	8504
Blink 182 - The Rock Show	4899	-	Good Charlotte - Young & Hopeless	9425	-	Sean Paul - Get Busy	8262	8682
Blu Cantrell - Breathe	9065	9041	Guns 'n' Roses - Sweet Child	3868	6977	Sean Paul - Gimme The Light	7682	-
Blue - Guilty	9405	9379	Guns 'n' Roses - Sweet Child	5859	6977	Sean Paul - I'm Still In Love	9701	9693
Blue - One Love	7856	8329	Him - Sacramento	9169	-	Sean Paul - Like Glue	9143	9185
Blue - U Make Me Wanna	8235	8330	Him - The Funeral Of Hearts	9716	9708	Shane Richie - I'm Your Man	9539	9521
Blur - Song 2	9755	9741	Jaimeson - Take Control	9769	9762	Snow Patrol - Run	9766	9761
Boogie Pimps - Somebody To Love	9700	9697	Jamelia - Superstar	9222	9266	Stacie Orrico - More To Life	9409	-
Britney - Me Against Music	9502	9517	Jennifer Lopez - All I Have	8066	8409	Story Of The Year - Until The	9752	9745
Busta Rhymes - I Know What	8587	8650	Jet - Are U Gonna Be My Girl	9717	9706	Sugababes - Hole In The Head	9392	9380
Busted - Crashed The Wedding	9501	9514	Joss Stone - Fell In Love	9770	9758	Sugababes - Too Lost In You	9662	9656
Busted - What I Go To School	7719	-	Judas Priest - Breaking The Law	9574	9566	Sum 41 - In Too Deep	5827	-
Busted - Year 3000	8052	8337	Justin Timberlake - Cry Me River	8067	8416	Sum 41 - The Hell Song	8072	-
Busted - You Said No	8590	8651	Justin Timberlake - Rock Body	8602	-	Tomcraft - Loneliness	8608	8687
Cheeky Girls - Cheeky Song	7961	8340	Kelis - Milkshake	9699	9696	Tupac - Runnin'	9749	9739
Christina Aguilera - Beautiful	7995	7901	Kelly & Ozzy - Changes	9512	9609	UD Project - Summer Jam	9273	-
Christina Aguilera - Dirty	7912	7898	Kevin Lyttle - Turn Me On	9393	9391	Ultrabeat - Feelin' Fine	9664	9649
CKY - 96 Quite Bitter Beings	6080	7168	Liberty X - Everybody Cries	9715	9707	Ultrabeat - Pretty Green Eyes	9105	9188
Coldplay - Clocks	8248	8344	Linkin Park - Behind Blue Eyes	9475	9720	Van Morrison - Brown Eyed Girl	4935	8563
Darkness - Thing Called Love	9157	9258	Linkin Park - From The Inside	9499	-	Wayne Wonder - Bounce Along	9467	9723
Darude - Sandstorm	9754	9740	Linkin Park - In The End	5398	6954	Wayne Wonder - No Letting Go	8782	8700
Delays - Long Time Coming	9748	9735	Linkin Park - Numb	9160	9582	Westlife - Mandy	9530	9525
Dido - White Flag	9196	9247	Lmc Vs U2 - Take Me To	9765	9763	White Stripes - 7 Nation Army	8594	8701
Distillers - Drain The Blood	9424	-	Lost Prophets - Last Train	9751	9734	Will Young - Leave Right Now	9542	9523
Dizzee Rascal - Fix Up Look	9134	-	Maroon 5 - Harder To Breathe	9747	9731	XTM & DJ - Fly On Wings	8730	9728
Dizzee Rascal - Jus' A Rascal	9553	-	Marques - Clubbin'	9639	9610	Zutons - Pressure Point	9750	9738

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	MONO	POLY		MONO	POLY		MONO	POLY		MONO	POLY
Angel	4603	8949	Deliverance	4457	9253	Itchy Scratchy	4642	9282	Only Fools Horses	6732	8697
A-Team	6454	8454	Exorcist	4460	7167	Jackass	5858	8557	Phoenix Nights	7538	7541
Austin Powers	1026	8690	Fields Of Anthreny	3828	9727	James Bond	1430	8077	Pulp Fiction	6715	8698
Banana Splits	5016	8950	Formula 1	3592	9032	League Of Gentlemen	5865	9034	Rainbow	4924	8964
Beverly Hills Cop	1432	9250	Friends	4462	8535	Littlest Hobo	8016	9283	Red Dwarf	3539	9189
Black Beauty	5501	8167	Godfather	4631	9255	Lord Of Rings	7950	9286	Rocky	1050	8542
Blowing Bubbles	3773	9722	Good, Bad & Ugly	4465	9268	Magnificent Seven	4920	9383	Scooby Doo	4562	9241
Buffy	1028	8553	Great Escape	3594	8956	Match Of The Day	1444	8270	Simpsons	1439	7164
Captain Pugwash	4620	9239	Hawaii Five O	3533	8695	Mission Imposs 2	1261	9261	Stepoe And Son	9279	9265
Dad's Army	6518	9726	Inspector Gadget	6633	9732	Mission Imposs	1421	6875	Top Gear	9757	9744
Dambusters	5788	9252	Italian Job	5658	9260	Muppets	4650	8271	Winnie Pooh	3893	6978

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8001 Aston Golf (see #1)	8908 Big Tree (see #2)	8909 Black vs White	8002 Black Widow	8003 Chains	8004 Demon's Treasure	8005 Diamond Mine	8910 Diamond Mine 2 (see #2)	8911 Escape Master (see #2)	8006 Forge a Fortune	8007 Fruit Machine	8008 Hell's Pit	8009 IceBlade Penguin (see #2)	8912 Maze Ark	8913 Maze Ark: The Mission	8914 Moon Taxi (see #3)	8915 New Skool Skater (see #4)	8010 Pillar Dodge	#1 except 6310i, #2 except T720	#3 except M55, S55, T720	#4 except all siemens, 6310i
 																				
 																				

ANIMATED

6988 - BAD BOY!	7121 - SKULL	7119 - SCARY MASK	7005 - DOG LICKS	7016 - MONKEY
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9771	9775
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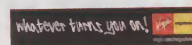


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NFS Underground beater? We squeeze this racing beauty until its chassis is sore and its exhaust dribbles



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We get physical with Leeza X in Headhunter's second coming to tell you if she's X-rated or X-tra mingling



FIGHT NIGHT 2004

We go 15 rounds with EA's pugilistic face-pounder to bring you the definitive review. Is it an Ali or a washed-up Tyson has-been?

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1994

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DVD, WAZZAT THEN?

No, we're not talking about DVDs, but a horrible format called CD-i. Back then the CVG

This rubbish scored 99% for graphics in 1994. Like, WHAT?!

Mad Dog McCree, a shooter that placed you in the heart of the Wild West tackling gangs of surly cowboys, used this new technology. In the arcades you could use a lightgun to shoot the varmints, but at home on the 3DO you had to try the same feat with the most unresponsive joystick ever designed. Boo!

But hey, the stupid stick was busy back then. Picture the scene: You've got a handheld system with the best battery life around, and a heavyweight gaming character going portable for the first time. How do you advertise it? If you're Nintendo, you ignore Link completely and instead make a visual gag about how many batteries you'll use while playing Zelda. Back in the days before rechargeable internal batteries, this isn't the message you want to send to cash-conscious parents. Is it? DUH!

Nintendo just don't learn, even 10 years later. Dumbasses

No other game looks like it
or lasts like it.

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TIME I'LL RULE
THE GAMING
WORLD!**

decade ago, it was billed as being a state of the art combat sim where you control a team of Navy Seals in the jungles of Vietnam. Amazingly, this crap scored 75% and people paid £45 (JESUS!) to play it! Look at the graphics and do your best not to laugh.

SO REAL

Which brings us neatly onto Rebel Assault. A Star Wars game not just for geeks, this was

"THEY THOUGHT CD-I WAS THE FUTURE. BUT THEN THEY ALSO GOT EXCITED ABOUT STAR TREK"

considered the cream of the crop of interactive entertainment that had it all – the battle of Hoth, the Death Star run. You needed a kicky PC and 50 notes to buy it. But with reviewers' comments such as "playing Rebel Assault is just like watching the Star Wars movies" and "TV quality images" one can only assume that they were watching the movies on a 20th-generation pirated copy. Idiots! Lucky nobody makes such overblown claims about games any more, eh? *

This was the pinnacle of first-person shooters using amazing new ideas!

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IAGUAR BITES

CVG went Stateside for the launch of the 64-bit system Atari promised would leave us hungry for more. Yeah, right. It sucked ass and so never took off here. PSone, anyone?

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Compact Disc? It'll never catch on...

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Seal Team, or is it Counter-Strike? Nope, just shite

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Commandos 2
Commandos 3
Commandos B. Enemy Lines
Delta Force
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Max Payne 2
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James Bond: Agent Under F.
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Lord of the Rings: T. Towers
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Mario Sunshine
Matrix, Enter the
Medal of Honor Frontline
Medal of Honor: R. Sun
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Minority Report
MX Superfly
NBA Live 2004
Need for Speed Undergrnd
Ocarina of Time: Master
Phantasy Star Online
Pikmin 2
Rebel Strike, R. Squadron 3
Reign Of Fire
Res. Evil: Code Veronica X
Resident Evil
Resident Evil Zero
Rogue Leader
Rogue Ops
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Sims: Bustin' Out
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Sphinx & Cursed Mummy
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Driver 3
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